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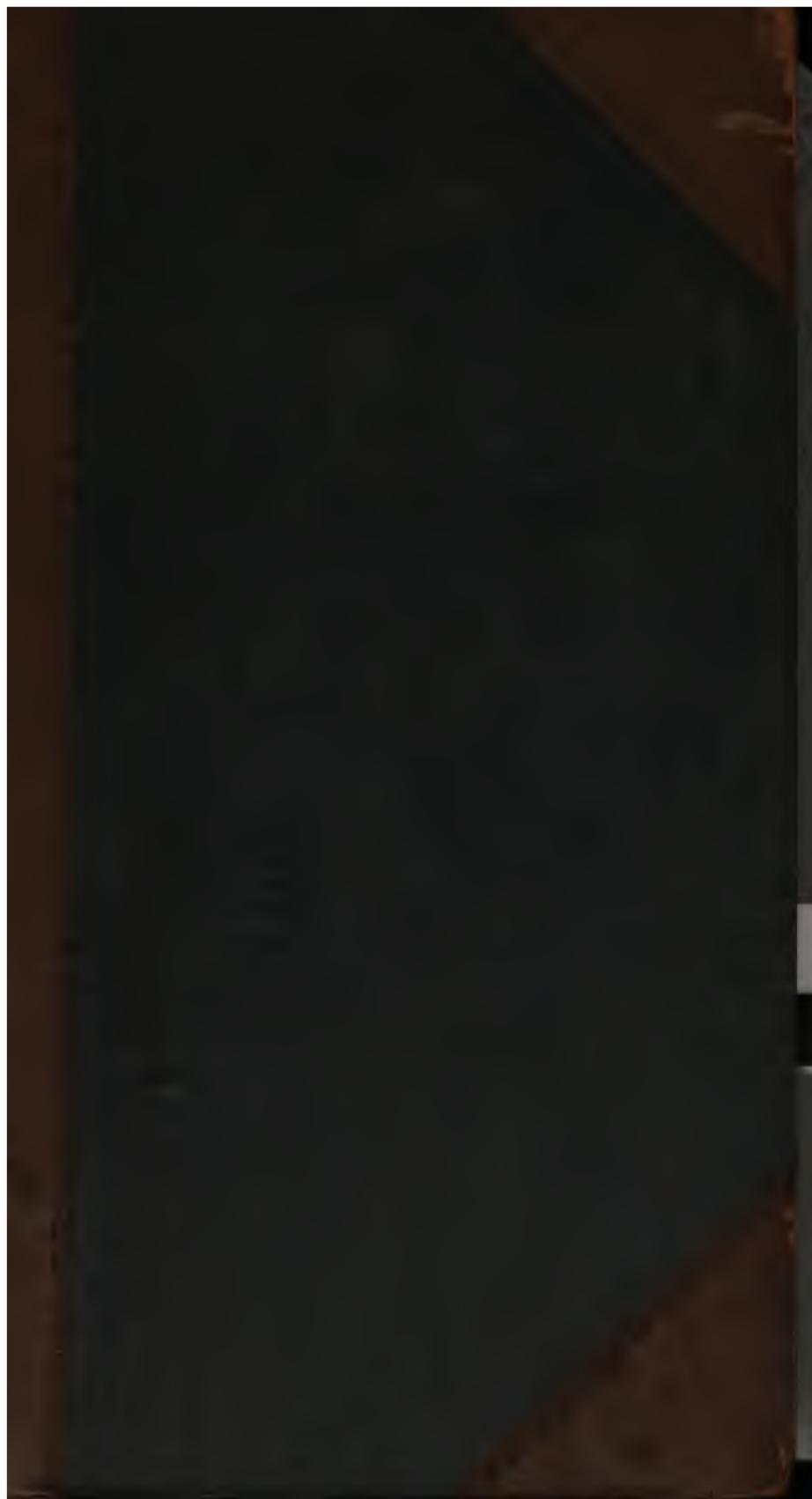
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THE
CURATE OF STEINHOLLT.



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THE
CURATE OF STEINHOLLT.

A TALE OF ICELAND.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



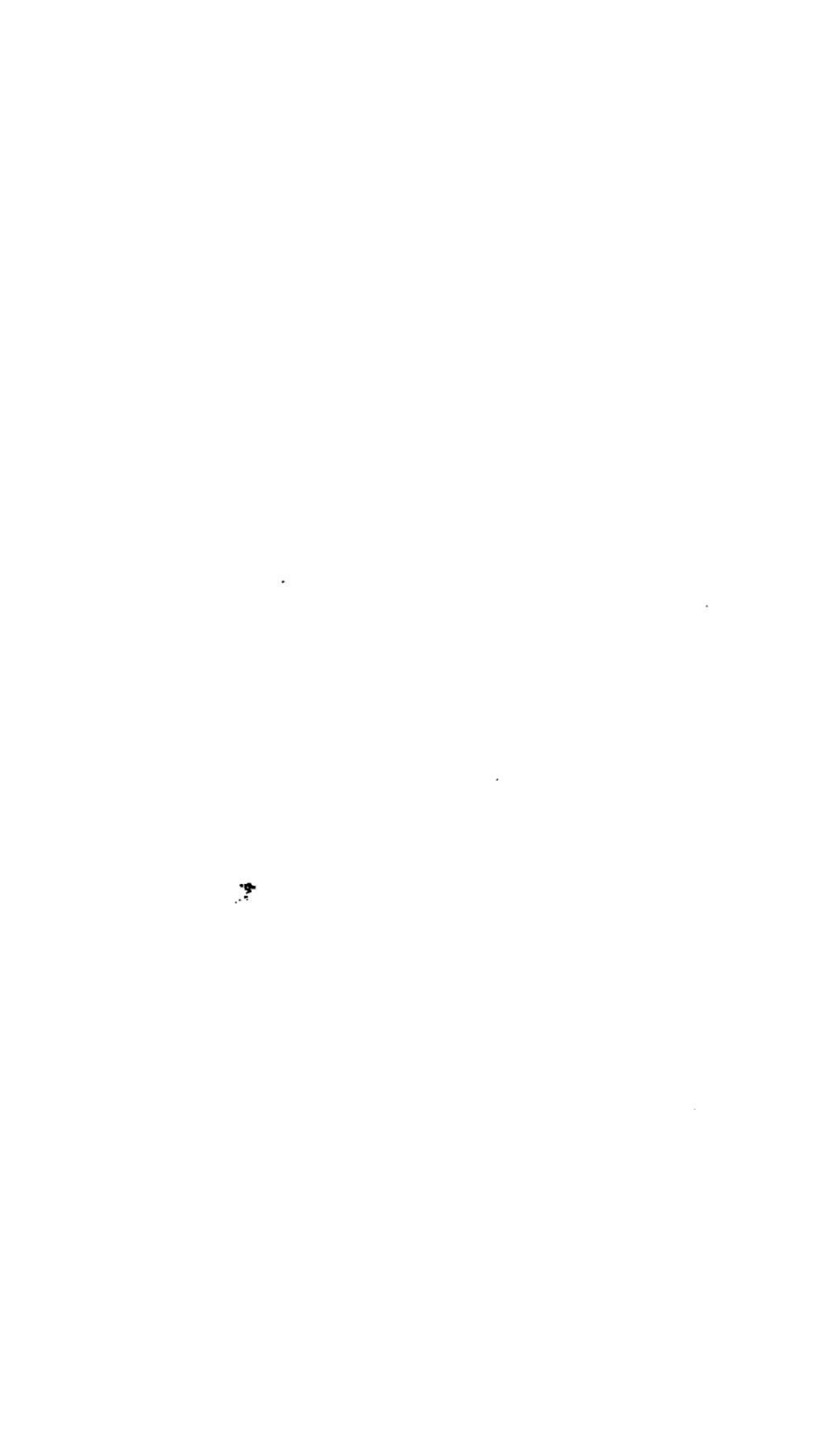
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THE
CURATE OF STEINHOLLT.

CHAPTER I.

IN the parish of Sida, on the southern coast of Iceland, there were several farms, previously to the great earthquake of 1783. The parish was bounded on the north by hills, beyond which there was a heath or common; further distant, and towards the north-west, the great Scapter Yökul* reared its lofty summit, while the Sida Yökul lay towards the north, and the Skeidera Yökul towards the north-east. At a short distance westward, flowed the river Scaptâ, in some parts broad and peaceful, in others rushing with impetuosity through vast chasms produced by volcanic convulsions. The land

* Or Jokul—a mountain covered with ice.

in Sida, generally, was fertile *: meadows irrigated by rivulets afforded pasture for numerous flocks; while little gardens (a novelty in Iceland) decked with such simple flowers as the country afforded, were interspersed among small but comfortable dwellings. Some parts of the neighbourhood exhibited a different aspect — they were wild and terrific.

Among the inhabitants of the parish there were the families of Magnusson and Bergman. In the year 1763, an infant from each of these was presented, on a Sunday, at the holy font, in Sida church, for the purpose of being admitted by baptism into the Christian fold. Two or three years rolled on, and Sira† Biarne, the clergyman of the parish, sunk beneath the weight of age and infirmities. When carried to the grave the parishioners followed his remains, for he was much beloved by them. The little children of the parish, also, walked in pairs

* Sida was one of the most cultivated districts of Iceland.

† The universal title of an Icelandic clergyman, signifying *father*.

behind the corpse, and among the rest, hand in hand, were Thorna Magnusson and Marfrede Bergman. After a few years, it was evident that they were much attached to each other. The youth delighted to attend her, when she was engaged in the garden or farm; sometimes he formed one of the party, when Thorna and her young companions went to the mountains for the purpose of gathering moss; and in the long evenings of winter he frequently made one of the pleasant company at Gudbrand Magnusson's house. With increase of years there was an increase of attachment; but they scarcely knew how much they loved each other until they were obliged to part.

Marfrede was an intelligent lad; and his father, at the suggestion of a relative, who had some influence in the family, determined on sending him to Copenhagen, in order to prepare him for the ministry. This was agreeable with Marfrede's inclination, for he loved learning, and his disposition was religious. The first burst of joy, however, on the settlement of his destination, was succeeded by an indefinable

and painful sensation — a sensation novel and almost overpowering; for he now began to feel, as if by magic, the united influence of those tender associations which bound him to his native village. When, in the evening, he sat with Thorna beneath an overhanging rock, while the moonbeams silvered the rivulet which murmured at their feet, and all besides was peaceful, except the feelings of the youth, and those of Thorna — for the maiden had observed his melancholy, and was anxious respecting the cause of it — he attempted to communicate the painful information; but his lips refused their office, his voice faltered, and he burst into tears. Thorna was excited from sympathy, and wept also. After a short time, in answer to her entreaties, Marfrede in broken hints confessed the cause of his agitation; and then the maiden evinced the natural vigour and goodness of her soul: she endeavoured to soothe her companion, and encouraged him to act agreeably with the plan which had been proposed for his welfare. But it seemed to him as if he were about to exchange all that was lovely and cheering for

gloom and misery. However, he became in some degree tranquil; and then these children of nature — uncontaminated by vice or prudery — confessed their mutual attachment; and vowed, in the presence of Heaven, and in that of the beautiful luminary which shone above them, that they would remain faithful to each other.

Thorna, although naturally firm and cheerful, could not completely rise above the amiable weakness of woman. Marfrede also was very unhappy: gloomy days and restless nights were experienced by both. The period soon arrived for Marfrede's departure. The parishioners assembled on the sorrowful morning; and as he bade them farewell, each one gave him a kiss and a blessing. Thorna, with several friends, accompanied him to a fishing boat which waited, at a distance of three or four miles from Sida, for the purpose of taking him to the ship which was about to sail for Copenhagen.

CHAP. II.

LET us now turn our attention to the Magnusson family — one which was highly esteemed in Sida, being both ancient and honourable. The Magnussons were among the first Danish settlers in the island; and three or four individuals of this family had, in different ages, held the office of Lögsögumadr*: hence it is not unnatural that a little family-pride should have sprung up among the Magnussons on this account. However, they were, on the whole, an amiable household. We must not, of course, (if we would be reasonable) expect to find good qualities unaccompanied by a certain proportion of failings; for shades are as necessary to define and set forth human character as natural scenery. The most brilliant scene is not without shadows (indeed, the shadows seem deep in proportion

* President of the *Althing* or General Assembly of the nation.

to the brilliancy), and the most perfect man is not without defects.

Gudbrand Magnusson was a hale, happy-looking old man of about sixty-five. He was religious and good-tempered — a very natural, but not an universal association. He endeavoured to view the occurrences of life in their best aspect; for he used to observe that every thing has two sides: one for our happiness, and another for our misery. He made allowances for the failings of others, and magnified his own defects: thus he was not severe and cynical, but humble and grateful. When cross circumstances arose which turned him from his usual track, he did not repine; and when pleasant events occurred, he thanked the Disposer of every good. Gudbrand conformed to a custom which prevailed among his forefathers, but which has been, in later times, neglected. He depended on, and acknowledged habitually, the merciful superintendence of Providence. When he arose from bed, he thanked God for his preservation. When he went abroad, or returned, he offered his addresses to the Divine

Being. When he was about to cross a river, or a chasm, or any other dangerous place, he took off his hat, and asked for the assistance of the unseen Guide; and when he had safely passed the danger, he offered up warm and heartfelt thanks. On Sabbath-days, the old man was attentive to the services of religion. He was not, however, on these occasions, gloomy or repulsive; he did not diffuse around him chiliness or fanaticism — but he exhibited the fruits, in his own life and temper, of genuine Christianity — kind, peaceful, and lovely. In Sida, owing to the neighbourhood of the farms to the church, public service was performed twice on the Sunday, at which Gudbrand and his family (except in two or three summer months *), were constantly present. On a fine evening, he was often to be seen sitting near the smithy† door,

* During the summer, a considerable part of every Iceland family is in the mountains.

† The smithy is a very necessary part of an Icelandic house. In this, the men, who are generally mechanics as well as agriculturists, make their farming and other implements.

reading Vidalin's sermons, or an old and much valued copy of Thorlakson's Bible.

Gunlöd Magnusson was the wife of good old Gudbrand. She was a worthy woman, but nervous; and hence sometimes uneasy and dissatisfied. An event which scarcely ruffled the father of the family disordered his helpmate for a whole day. She was accustomed to look on the dark side of things, and to wander among shadows: thus her prospective as well as her present view was gloomy; and, as it is with such persons — for they have some bright prospects — the brightness was confined to the past. Thus, as a fire may burn briskly, though it be scarcely perceived in the rays of the sun, and become clear and bright as the shadows of evening mantle it, so earthly events, although favourable, seem pleasant to some people only when the shadows of forgetfulness gather around them. Gunlöd's defects were not those of the heart or the head, but of the nerves; and this, perhaps, is the principal source of woman's defects.

The next in years was Eggert Magnusson, an

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her, she lost her balance, and fell across a juniper bush; then, rebounding, she fell backward into the current, passed through a subterranean passage, and floated out near old Gudbrand, who was overlooking a party of haymakers. At another time, she began to work in the smithy, and caught her clothes on fire: then, being enveloped in flames, she was drenched with water, which fortunately was close at hand. On one occasion, this erratic girl was standing with her brother and sister, at a little distance from the *tún*.* “I should wish,” said she, “to be like the witch I was reading of yesterday.” (Vola was become flighty.)

“What witch?” inquired Thorna.

“The witch,” replied Vola, “who, when she was floating on a pond, where she had been put by the silly Bifoged†, who thought himself superior to witches, conjurers, and gods, asked for a bit of thread; and when she had

* Or *toon*, the cultivated ground immediately around a dwelling.

† The sheriff of Reykiavick, the capital of Iceland.

received it, she held it in the air, and the thread became erect, and ascended towards the heavens, pulling the witch after it; while the silly people were left gazing in astonishment."

"Now Vola," said Thorna, "you are beginning to talk nonsense."

"Pray, my dear, say something better yourself. I know that I never say any thing good; or, at least, so I, in my humble way, conclude; but pray, my dear Thorna, what should you like to be?"

"I can scarcely tell what I should like to be. I suppose I am best as I am."

"I should like," said Vola, "to be different from what I am, and if changed, I should like to be different again; and thus I should like to go on varying as the cloud that assumes a thousand forms, and is sometimes dark and lowering, then white and fleecy, then glowing with light."

"Make yourself content as you are," said Thorna; "unless, indeed, you can become wiser and better."

"My dear Thorna!" exclaimed the sister,

“ I do not like your dull, monotonous notions of things. I should like to be a bird. I should like sometimes to flutter among bushes and flowers, sometimes to frolic and bathe myself in the mountain stream.”

“ My dear,” said Thorna, smiling, “ you did that once.”

“ None of your raillery, girl ! ” replied the maiden. “ It is better to be torn with brambles, grazed with rocks, or half drowned in streams, than to dwell like a snail for ever in its native home, without any variation in its circumstances. I should like, for a little time, to resemble old Heimdal, (I ask the god’s pardon !) who dwells in a celestial habitation, at the summit of his rainbow bridge; and I should like to contend with and conquer the giants who wish to enter Heaven. But I would not resemble Heimdal for more than a day. I should like, it is true, to spend a night in the skies; but I should try to get beyond the old bridge-keeper, and to wander among the stars. My dear Thorna, what would you say, if you saw me at midnight, up in the dark blue hea-

vens, pushing my head through the solid vault, and looking down on you?"

"O Vola!" she exclaimed, "do not be so silly."

"Now again, my dear sister, you are beginning to be prosy."

"I like common sense," replied Thorna.

"Perhaps you do; and I would that the liking were mutual. However, one common-sense person in a family is enough. I never wish to be of your mind. You confine yourself to a few trifling things — to the house, the garden, the meadows, the flock, and a few sober and dull-witted books, while I wing my way, in imagination, to all parts of the earth, to the heavens, to the whole universe!"

"You get these notions," replied Thorna, "by reading the Edda so frequently. You study that, I believe, more than the Bible."

"I read both. But now that you have mentioned the Edda, you have opened a new source of desires. I wish I were,—indeed, I can scarcely tell what I wish to be. I should like to have eyes that would penetrate all parts

of the earth, and see what exists within it — that would soar into the heavens, and tell me what the stars are made of, and what exists beyond. I should like to see creation different from what it is, and then different again — changing every day. I should like to hear the sweet musical sounds that are struck by spirits in the upper air, and should like to see their abodes, and admire their beautiful persons and raiment. I should like to hear the moonbeams falling on a lake, or see the zephyrs gambolling among spiry grass. I should like to be all things, any thing, or nothing !”

“ My dear Vola !” exclaimed her sister, “ do not run on in this silly manner.”

“ The girl is mad !” said Eggert.

“ My good Eggert,” she replied, “ you will never be mad.”

Then Vola began to sing and dance. Just at that moment, she caught hold of a sapling, and let herself down from the cliff to the back of one of her father’s horses, (the animal was feeding below) and seized his flowing mane. The horse, startled at the unexpected visit,

sprang off, reared, and bounded fearfully, so that Vola, though an excellent horsewoman, was flung off. Happily, she was not seriously injured; but she was frightened, and cured, for about a month, of her wild eccentricities.

CHAP. III.

As soon as Marfrede stepped into the boat, he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and wept. He could not bear the thought of parting with his beloved Thorna, or with the country that had given him birth, that had nursed him, and fed him, and spread around him a thousand sources of innocent delight — delight which a native alone experiences. The love of country is, without doubt, one of the most natural feelings; and there is none more allowable, for it springs up in the purest hearts — in hearts uncontaminated by luxury and vice. Men do not love their native land because of its abstract beauty, or fertility, or riches, but because it is associated with delightful remembrances: they love it because they have lived happily in it, and because, when they think of the groves, the hills, the summer vales, and the winter fireside, a thousand pleasing feelings crowd on the

memory. The love of home was so powerful in Marfrede that, like the mother who cannot look on her lovely babe when it is stricken by the hand of death, he could not look on the shores of Sida when he was parting from them.

Thorna remained for some time gazing on the boat and the ocean; and so deep was her reverie, that she passed insensibly from sight to remembrance, and fancied that the boat was near the shore, as it had been a few minutes before. Eggert came to her, and took her hand. "Oh!" she exclaimed, in great alarm, "the boat — where is the boat?"

"What do you mean?" he inquired.

"The boat with Marfrede! it was here only a moment since, and now," she continued, almost in an agony, "it is gone. Oh! it is sunk — It is —"

"Oh! no," said Eggert; "there it is" — pointing to a considerable distance on the water.

"But I saw it here."

"No, no; you have been dreaming."

Eggert led her from the beach; but she was

so much agitated and bewildered as hardly to know where she was, or what she was doing. She scarcely spoke on the way homeward; and when she reached her dwelling, shut herself up, and spent the evening in solitude.

On the next day, the maiden came forth, calm, and even cheerful. As the tranquil and unclouded light of Heaven, after gloomy days and storms, appears more delightful because of the contrast, so this lovely girl seemed more than usually lovely. It is a great blessing for man, that gloomy feelings are not allowed to be permanent. Miserable, indeed, would human existence be if a mental injury fretted, and festered, and left a durable wound: but, as it is — thanks to a benevolent Providence! — our sorrow, sooner or later, is turned to joy. As joyousness, however, succeeds depression, so depression succeeds joyousness. These changes may be attributed to the united influence of novelty and association. Something new excites the mind; association immediately introduces similarities; and the mental vision is filled with darkness or glowing light. When these prin-

ciples have exhausted themselves — when association has ceased to operate, and the mind is satisfied or even satiated with what is spread before it — there is a pause, the curtain is dropped, and another scene is exhibited. If the mind previously were bright and joyous, now dark shadows roll before it, and a thousand doleful things are seen. There is, of course, a great variety among minds: some are subject to extremes, others vary but little. In the former case, the mind discerns objects in a clear, or, perhaps, highly-coloured aspect, and the principle of association is very active: almost every thing that has been, is, or may be, is introduced. In the latter case, the mind perceives not such an assemblage of good or evil. Persons of the former character are easily elated or depressed; those of the latter are more equable. Hence, without pursuing this digression, it may be observed that a reflection or two will probably suggest itself to the reader. Persons subject to extremes are influenced by partial views; consequently they are not a safe guide for others. The total sum of happiness among

men is pretty equally divided: if some experience deeper sorrows, they experience higher joys; if some are not crushed by calamities, they are not much elevated by blessings. The amount of an individual's happiness is not to be estimated by occasional indications of feeling, nor even by occasional professions; for most men, during excitement, behold the present, but forget the past. As novelty is the principal source of pleasure and pain, and novelty is relative, it is probable that men in all ranks are similarly affected by it: hence the poor are not destitute of enjoyment; and the rich or learned, though they may seem in the distant view to be encircled with streams of delight, possess, in reality, little advantage over their fellow-creatures.

Thorna was usually gentle in her disposition, and not subject to sudden or abrupt changes; but it was owing to the powerful influence of association, and the novelty of the occurrence, that she felt so deeply on Marfrede's departure; and it was owing to the same causes, under the fostering wings of hope, that she was calm and joyous on the following morning.

“I am glad, my dear girl,” said Gudbrand, “to perceive a smile on your countenance.”

Thorna blushed a little, and her pretty face wore a more decided smile.

“Ah!” said the old man, “sorrow is unavoidable; but it is wise to make short work of it.”

“My dear Thorna,” interposed Gunlög; “I wish I could prevail on you, now that Marfrede is gone, to think no more of him.”

“Mother!” exclaimed Thorna, “do you mean this?”

“Yes, child; I have always thought that the attachment, perhaps on both sides, was premature and ill-judged.”

“You never said so before,” replied Thorna.

“True; I thought it useless: but if you will take my advice, now that Marfrede is gone, wean your mind from him.”

“Mother! you know that I rarely attempt to thwart your wishes: but what induces you to give me this advice?”

“I fear, my dear, that this attachment will bring you much anxiety. Marfrede is now on

his way to Copenhagen: he may remain there for several years, and succeed in his studies, and be appointed to a parish: but, even then, he would gain but a scanty living for himself and family. Sira Gudmerson receives only—— How much is it, my dear?" addressing herself to Gudbrand.

"Fifty-five rix-dollars* a year," he replied.

* The income of a clergyman in Iceland is now still less, owing to the withdrawal, in most instances, of the stipend allowed by the Danish Government; so that it scarcely averages thirty-five rix dollars. Hence clergymen are obliged to depend on other engagements besides those of their office, for a livelihood; some of which are not very consistent with the natural dignity of the clerical character—as, for instance, the shoeing of horses! And here it may not be irrelevant to state, that the *establishment* of religion in that country has been declining for several centuries. Formerly, as we find in the *Chronicon Chronicorum*, (lib. i. p. 44.) there were two bishopricks in Iceland,— at Scalholt and Holum. The inhabitants at that time were numerous and comparatively wealthy: they traded to almost all parts of the world. After the Reformation, which was established in 1540, the bishopricks were continued, but were poor. About forty years since, both were abolished, and one was founded at Reykiavik instead, which now exists, and is supported by a small revenue. Iceland seems to have

“Only fifty-five rix-dollars,” she continued, “and Sida is a much better parish than many. Perhaps Marfrede may be a curate, and be paid only forty rix-dollars annually: and what is this for the maintenance of a household? But if he should fail in his endeavours — if he should grow cool in his attachment — if he should fall a prey to sickness — then, after having tarried for several years, and passed the heyday of life, you would be compelled, under disadvantageous circumstances, to form another connection.”

“I beg pardon, old lady,” said Vola, “but

been declining in many respects. The population is much less than formerly. In 1801, there were about 47,000 inhabitants: but in 1767, when Kerguelen visited it, there were 70,000; and he adds, that, previously to a dreadful epidemic in the fifteenth century, the country was much more populous.—(Relation d'un Voyage, &c. 4to. p. 87.) Iceland now produces no grain, nor did it in the time of Puffendorf (who says that Denmark supplied it with this necessary article); but, about three centuries ago, it furnished enough for the inhabitants. It is now destitute of trees; but many centuries since there were extensive forests on it. In the ninth century, when Garder Suafarson visited it, it was described as a well-wooded island.

I tell you that when I wish to make a love-engagement, I shall not think of having it tried by your standard. I shall be as free as the mountain air when it embraces the sunbeams."

"Hush! child," said Gudbrand, "you know little of these matters."

"More than you fancy, perhaps, father!" replied Vola, with an arch expression.

"Mother!" said Thorna, "your reflections are too gloomy. We must not view the dark side, and forget that there is a bright one. If a dense mist covers a lovely prospect, shall we think of the mist only, and forget the prospect?"

"Do you not, mother," inquired Vola, "know that a person may look at the bright, beautiful sun, and if his eyes are weak, he will see nothing but dark forms. Is the sun dark,—is all creation dark,—because his eyes are disordered?"

"Thank you, Vola," said her sister; "that was a word spoken in season. My dear mother, you behold the dark forms, but not the cheering rays. There are, perhaps, pleasing

prospects connected with the subject to which you have referred. However, I have allowed Marfrede's attention with your knowledge, and without any marks of disapproval; now the objection is too late."

"Yes, yes, child," added Gudbrand, "you have hitherto acted prudently, now act honourably, and the God of your fathers will bless you."

Here the conversation ended; the morning's devotions were performed; the family sat down to breakfast; and after breakfast, agreeably with a previous arrangement, Thorna, Vola, some of the male and female domestics*, and Eggert set off for the mountains. The weather was delightful: it was a lovely day in June. A part of the route was on plains; but it soon became elevated, when some of the most singular and impressive scenes presented themselves, for the

* Domestics in Iceland belong, frequently, to families which are but little inferior to those with whom they serve. There is so much equality between the children and servants of a house, that they are deemed suitable companions for each other; and sometimes, with the consent of friends on both sides, intermarry.

face of nature, on every hand, was torn by volcanic convulsions. Sometimes the adventurers tracked a ledge along the brink of a precipice ; sometimes they threaded deep fissures ; and sometimes, on a plank or creaking bridge, crossed deep chasms. When they had reached the mountains, Thorna said to her companions “ Let us go across and see Loke’s* Well ; for I never come into this part without looking at it.” The well was a singular hollow, of vast depth and dimensions — not less than six hundred feet deep, and half a mile in circumference. The sides were composed of huge rocks, half calcined and very black. It was an awful abyss to look into ; indeed some had become giddy in the attempt. A few years before Thorna visited it, a woman of Sida looked over the edge of the precipice, and became dizzy ; she stepped back, and then, not knowing on which side it lay, her brain being in a whirl, she staggered towards the brink, and went ever. No person ever saw her again : it was so deep

* Loke is the evil principle among the Icelanders. The well was filled up during the convulsions of 1783.

and dark that no one could or would venture down to remove the dead body. On the side towards the icy mountain, a stream burst over the edge of the precipice, and fell in a glistening, unbroken sheet, until it reached a projecting rock about half way down, when it was divided into two streams. The dashing waters sent up a sepulchral, hollow roar; but in the lower part they were hid in gloom, except that, here and there, a wreath of foam was seen flitting along, as a living creature hurrying from human observation. In the centre of the gulf there was a boiling lake of bitumen, from which ascended columns of steam. When the sun shone, and the upper surface of the vapour was gilded, the effect was beautiful, and formed a singular contrast with the blackness spread around. The water which fell into Loke's Well was carried off by a subterranean channel. It was said, and confidently believed, by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, that fiends and the souls of wicked men dwelt in the dark caverns which were supposed to exist in the lower parts of the gulf. While Thorna, and her com-

panions, who were dismounted, were standing near the brink, a pigeon flew over them, and darted into the abyss; a falcon followed, and striking the fugitive with its beak, drove it a considerable distance with the force of the blow; then darting after it, seized and ascended with it just above the heads of the spectators — the little creature distinctly contrasted with the snowy breast, dusky white wings, and bright yellow legs of its victor: then, again, it was hid, while the falcon, as if in defiance of the party, dived a little below the edge of the gulf, and exhibited its dark brown plumage, fancifully barred and mottled with reddish white. Vola, who possessed much goodness of heart, and disliked any thing cruel, began to utter execrations on the falcon for killing the pigeon: her anger, however, was exchanged for delight, when she saw an eagle descend, and pounce on the falcon, which dropt its prey; then the eagle darted after the falling pigeon, seized it, and carried it off.

“ If the falcon had kept the pigeon,” said Vola, “ I would have sprung out on it, if

by so doing I could have killed the cruel bird."

"Vola!" exclaimed her sister, "don't be so foolish. You make my very blood chilly."

"Should you not like," inquired Vola (nothing daunted), "to step on a plank from this rock to that beautiful mound of smoke, and to trip about on it?"

"Silence, girl," said Thorna; "don't talk so madly."

A large stone was now, with some difficulty, brought by Eggert, and rolled over the edge of the precipice. The stone grazed one rock, then another, then thundered among some of the projecting masses, and lower and still lower the sounds were heard, while the echoes rang among the cliffs and caverns.

"I thought I heard a groan," said Vola.

"You are generally hearing or seeing something wonderful," said her sister. "What will you hear or see next?"

"Hear or see!" exclaimed Vola: "why the ground is moving beneath us. There, now we are carried along, and are sailing over the

abyss ; we shall be landed — Where ? no one knows."

" Vola ! you are surely deranged," said her sister : " the ground is not moving."

Vola laid herself down, and shut her eyes. " Now," she said, " we are going onward. It is but a small piece of ground on which we rest, and we are sinking into the gloomy depths. It is becoming darker and darker. There ! I see something — it is a huge form, nearly all head, and it is wriggling towards us. Now it is passed away. Now the rocky doors are opening, and exhibiting an apartment lighted with dazzling lamps, in which are multitudes of creatures moving about, covered with scales which glow with the richest colours. Good bye, Thorna ! I am going from you : I am sinking into a gulf — a gulf without bottom. I can see stars beneath me. Now, now," she continued, staring around, " I am come out on the opposite part of the earth."

Thorna, Eggert, and the rest of the company, burst into loud laughter.

" You are arrived at the other side of the

earth, are you?" exclaimed Thorna: "then, of course, you cannot go with us."

"Oh!" said Vola, half roused from her reverie, "I can go—I shall go with you."

"The girl is surely a little out of the way," said Eggert: "however, I fancied I heard a groan."

The party remounted their horses, which had been standing at a little distance; and going onward, sometimes on ledges of rocks, and sometimes on grassy slopes, arrived at a fine open tract of meadow land*, lying at the base of a mountain, the summit of which was clothed with snow, and half veiled with clouds. Here they pitched their tents, and, on the next morning, were ready for their engagement of gathering moss.† The party were full of spirits; for no time is so happy as the moss-gathering time, and no place so delightful, in fine weather, as the mountains. What a contrast exists

* "Entre ces rochers et ces montagnes il y a de belles plaines et de beaux vallons." — Relation d'un Voyage, &c., par M. de Kerguelen, 4to. p. 34.

† This is the *Lichen Islandicus*, and is called by them *fialla-gras*

between the winter and the summer in those regions ! In the winter, life becomes extinct ; beauty is exchanged for sterility ; sounds of mirth and laughter are never heard, but deadly silence prevails, or the howling of mournful winds.

Before they left the tent, Thorna said, " My dear Vola, you have some skill in music ; give us, as an introduction to our work, the summer song."

" I have no objection," said Vola, who was usually of an obliging disposition when requests of this sort were made ; and, taking her lang-spiel * from a travelling-box, she sang — accompanied by its music, and the voices of her companions —

" The snows, the snows are fled,
And verdure clothes the ground ;
The earth is free from its icy band,
And beauty beams around.

The thyme, the fragrant thyme
Unfolds its modest flowers ;

* This and the violin are almost the only instruments seen in Iceland.

The clustering gold of the poppy* glows
Around great Odin's bowers."†

The moss, the verdant moss
Carpets the rugged hills,
While sparkling, murmuring streams burst forth
To play in sunny rills.

Fishes on silvery waves,
Songsters in bright array,
Eagles that circle the vault of heaven,
Are frölicsome and gay.

The curlew's mournful tale
Is wreathed with notes of glee :
The raven's ‡ croaking, discordant voice
Is lost in melody.

The snows, the snows are fled,
And verdure clothes the ground :
Sweet voices are heard of joy and praise,
Above, beneath, around."

" Thank you," said Thorna. " Now then,
girls ! for the baskets."

The moss-gathering was immediately com-
menced ; and the party worked briskly and mer-

* Poppies are most numerous among volcanic rocks and cliffs.

† Natural caverns are sometimes called the bowers of Odin.

‡ The raven is much disliked by the Icelanders, and is considered a bird of ill omen.

rily for a couple of days. On the second evening, Thorna sat with her companions, and laughed* until her heart was heavy ; then she slipt away from them, and wandered for some time, indulging herself in pleasing, melancholy feelings. On recovering from her reverie, she looked about, but knew not where she was ; for the sun was set, and a silvery twilight was spread around. The maiden ascended one hill and then another, but could recognise none of the surrounding scenery, unless it was, at a considerable distance, the summit of the mountain ; while the more she wandered, the more bewildered she became. At length, weary and desponding, she sat down, when the sound of

* " It has been said that, in general, the Icelanders are of a sullen and melancholy disposition ; but, after paying the strictest attention to their appearance and habits, I must pronounce the statement inaccurate, and one which could only have been made by those who have had little or no intercourse with that people. On the contrary, I have been surprised at the degree of cheerfulness and vivacity which I have found to prevail among them, and that not unfrequently under circumstances of considerable external depression and want." — HENDERSON's *Travels in Iceland*, p. 20.

horses was heard. She was startled, and her feelings alternated between hope and fear; for the horses, she reflected, might belong to friends or foes — to travellers, or mountaineers prowling for prey. Indeed, the parish of Sida had been alarmed, in the early part of the spring, with a report that Waldi Freyde, a man notorious for piracy on the coast of Denmark, had, with several companions, secreted himself in some part of the mountains. This report was afterwards contradicted, and the fears of the people were subsided before the Magnussons set out on their excursion. Thorna was now in a state of great excitement, and could not, by any effort, divest herself of a presentiment of evil. Within a few minutes, the train came near, and passed the bank on which she sat: some one rode the leading horse, and three horses followed laden with various goods.* As the rider had not perceived the maiden, she arose, and stepping after him, inquired the way to Signarhraun.

* These are generally carried in boxes, one on each side of the horse.

While she was speaking, some one came behind her, and clasped her roughly round the waist. She slipped from his grasp, and turning round, saw a tall ruffian in a sheep-skin dress.

“ Holloo ! maiden,” he cried, “ what are you doing here ? — Enticing the man from his horses, or anxious to have a ride ? ”

“ Oh ! no, I have lost my way.”

“ Then I will put you right. Go with me.”

“ No : I cannot. Will you,” said she, in a supplicating tone, “ direct me the way to Signarhraun ? ”

“ Direct you ? Yes, I ’ll put you on one of the horses, and you ’ll get there one day.”

“ Oh ! ” cried Thorna, “ if you will be so kind as to tell me, I shall be very grateful.”

“ No, no : you are going with me,” said he, taking her by the hand.

“ Oh ! ” cried the maiden, “ let me go ! — For God’s sake let me go.” And then she struggled to liberate herself.

“ You shall go with me,” said the fellow, roughly. “ Here, Oddur, jump down, and help the maiden on one of the horses.”

Oddur sprang off, and held the horse, while the robber seized Thorna, and, notwithstanding her struggles and screams, lifted her on it.

Now, for a moment, let us sympathise with the unfortunate maiden. Two or three hours before, she was the gayest of the gay—cheerful as the morning-birds that warble their joys in the roofless temple of their Maker; free as the wandering breeze, or the echoes among the hills: now she was wretched, a slave—the captive of the notorious Waldi Freyde!

In order to drown the lamentations of Thorna, Waldi and his companion struck up a bandit-song, and roared as if they wished to make the distant mountains hear them. This was fortunate for Eggert and a man-servant, who were anxiously searching for the maiden; and, hastening to the spot, they saw the ruffians leading the horses, with the captive on one of them.

“ There she is ! ” said Eggert. “ What is she doing there ? Who are these fellows ? What are they going to do with her ? ”

Several questions of a similar kind were

poured forth by the youth without waiting for a reply ; and he was about to spring on them, but Gudmandr pulled him back, and said, “ Stop — do stop for a moment. These fellows, I dare say, are some of the robbers that have been infesting the mountains.”

“ No, that can’t be,” said Eggert. “ They are all gone.”

The youth was pressing on, but Gudmandr held him back. “ Now do not,” said he, “ be rash ; for if we rush on them without consideration, we shall be vanquished, and then my young mistress will be lost. Let us decide on some mode of attack.”

Eggert perceived the reasonableness of these monitions ; and that it would be necessary, as their only weapons were two spears, to make up in prudence what was deficient in arms ; it was agreed, therefore, to follow the fellows closely, and, when a favourable opportunity offered, for Eggert to attack one, and Gudmandr the other. It was now a period of great anxiety, especially to Eggert ; for, as the issue of every trial of strength is uncertain, the

issue of this involved the fate of a beloved sister: however, master and man were determined to rescue Thorna, or die in the attempt. Just at this moment, the gentle captive entreated the robbers to release her. "Oh! do let me go," she cried; "it can be of no use to take me from my friends." And then tears choked her voice. Waldi turned and swore brutally on her. This fired the blood of Eggert. "I'll wait no longer," said he; "I'll master this villain: Gudmandr, you take the other."

They sprang immediately on the ruffians; and, at the first onset, Eggert drove his spear into the side of Waldi; then, recovering himself, he drew back, extricated the weapon, and gave the fellow a second thrust. Waldi, startled at the sudden attack, reeled, but did not fall; blood was streaming from him; he uttered a loud curse, and drawing a pistol fired at Eggert: happily, the ball merely grazed his shoulder — it did not disable him. The youth flung away his spear, and springing at his antagonist, with the fury of a lion, seized him,

and threw him backward with great violence off the ground, falling on him. He was up, however, in a moment, and his knee was planted on the robber's breast; but he discovered that the conflict was over — Waldi was senseless. Then the victor turned for a moment to assist Gudmandr, and perceived, for the first time, that the horses and maiden were gone: in a state of distraction he was about to pursue them, when a cry from Gudmandr arrested him. The man having less muscular strength or impulse than the master, found that he had no easy work to vanquish Oddur. They had been struggling, and were exhausted, but neither yielded. Eggert seized his spear, and sprang at the robber, but the latter, by a sudden effort, avoided the thrust; while Eggert, thrown off his balance, fell down with considerable force. At the same moment, Oddur, inspirited with the hope of victory, struck Gudmandr to the ground, and, giving him an almost stunning kick, flew to Eggert, and threw himself on the youth to prevent his rising. What increased the misfortune was that Waldi

was become partially re-animated, and was beginning to move. Eggert and Oddur now grasped each other ; and just before they began to roll, one over the other, down a short slope, Eggert had a glimpse of Waldi rising from the ground. All hope was now gone ! The sudden thought—the momentary pang—that Thorna was lost, almost unmanned him. Happily, when they reached the bottom of the slope, though a little giddy, he was able to look around, and found that Oddur was rolled beyond him, and not yet moving. Hope now inspirited him, especially when he found that Waldi was not arrived ; and running up the slope, saw his antagonist half risen, but apparently incapable of completing the movement. He sprang towards him, and pushed him to the ground ; then spying a piece of cord hanging from a box which had been flung from one of the horses, he seized it, and, within a minute, passed it round Waldi's body, tying the hands tightly to his side. He now ran towards Oddur, and met him limping up the slope : there was no consideration now ; he flew

at him, and down they went together. Eggert broke his fall on Oddur, and then shot beyond him; and though jerked and struck pretty much, no bone was broken, and the small share of consciousness which remained enabled him to regain his feet. Oddur lay on the ground, groaning. While in perplexity as to what he should do, he spied some one's head. At first, he was startled, for he thought it was Waldi: it proved however, to be Gudmandr, recovered in some degree from his rough treatment; on which Eggert could not refrain from expressing aloud his gratitude to God—for now there seemed to be no doubt as to the issue of the combat. Gudmandr kept Oddur on the ground, while Eggert procured another piece of cord and tied the fellow's hands and feet.

Eggert and Gudmandr now left the robbers, and set out in quest of the maiden, whom they found, at no great distance, tied to one of the horses; and, cutting the fastenings, lifted her, in a state of great agitation, from the back of the animal. “O my dear Eggert!” she cried; but her feelings were too powerful for utter-

ance. The youth embraced his sister tenderly, and then all set off, as fast as possible, for the tents. The fear of being pursued gave supernatural energy to the maiden, so that she ran and walked in company with her deliverers, and arrived in a comparatively short time at the place where Vola and her companions were assembled in anxious debate. The silvery haze of twilight—for the light had been scarcely less than this—was now succeeded by the gleaming of the rising sun. As soon as congratulations had been expressed, and grateful thanks to Heaven, it was deemed proper to return, as soon as possible, to Sida. Within an hour, the tents were struck, the horses laden, and the train was moving towards the district which it had left—the district of peace and security.

CHAP. IV.

WHEN the party reached Sida it was evening ; and good old Gudbrand was rising from his out-door seat to enter his dwelling when he heard the sound of horses and human voices. Looking around, he saw the moss-gathering party. " Holloo !" said he, as he went to meet them, " How is this ? — How are you back so soon ? "

" We have got plenty of moss, father," replied Thorna.

" Ah ! but that is not the reason," said Vola.

" Hush !" whispered her sister.

" What has happened then ? " inquired Gudbrand.

" Nothing, nothing, father, of consequence. There was a little occurrence," she added, as she dismounted, " but we are all safe and sound. We will tell you by and by."

" Come in, my dears," said the good old

man ; and taking Thorna's hand, he led the way. "Gunlög," he cried, "the children are come."

"Come ! How is this ?" exclaimed the matron, in a tone indicating both joy and surprise. Then, before any more was said, kisses began to fly pretty thickly on all sides. This pleasing ceremony being concluded, and the tired travellers seated, Gudbrand said, "Now, my dears, tell me the occasion of your early return."

"Father !" exclaimed Vola, "our dear Thorna, who is much displeased with me for playing, what she terms foolish pranks, has been playing one in earnest."

"How ? How ? my dear," inquired Gunlög.

Thorna was beginning to explain, when Vola said, "She wandered from us, and when Eggert and Gudmandr found her, she was with Waldi Freyde, the noted robber !"

Both parents lifted their hands, and uttered exclamations of astonishment.

"My dear parents !" exclaimed Thorna, "Vola generally gives a false colour to her stories. I lost my way : I was seized by two ruffians, and

rescued by dear Eggert and Gudmandr." Then she related the particulars of the event.

"God is merciful!" ejaculated old Gudbrand, with tears in his eyes.

"Yes, indeed, indeed," responded the agitated Gunlöd, "he is merciful."

"I had no thought," said Gudbrand, "that Waldi was in that part of the country: if I had, I am sure, my dears, you should not have gone."

"I think, father," said Eggert, who was now come in, "we must endeavour to find this fellow."

"But how, my dear?" inquired Gudbrand.

"There are several of the neighbours," he replied, "who are determined to go in search of him to-morrow. I dare say the hreppstiorè* will go."

"You had better stay at home," said Gunlöd. "God has mercifully preserved you. Do not tempt him by throwing yourself in the way of danger."

"It is the way of duty, probably," replied Gudbrand.

* An officer somewhat like our constable.

“I think I will go also. We were glad to receive our child; and we are, I hope, thankful to Divine Providence for his goodness; but, should we not feel desirous of preventing evils from falling on other parents? What proof shall we give of gratitude for favours received, if not by endeavouring to act as a means in the hand of God for conferring good on others? Ought we not, if possible, to prevent this robber, and perhaps murderer, from bringing the grey hairs of some affectionate father or mother with sorrow to the grave?”

“There would be no necessity, however,” said Gunlöd, “to run any risk. You might accompany the rest, but not expose yourself to danger.”

“Danger!” exclaimed Eggert, “there won’t be much danger in taking one man, or half a dozen, with the force that we shall muster: besides, the robbers, I think, are disabled.”

“I shall say nothing to persuade you,” observed Thorna, “but I think there will be little danger in the undertaking.”

“I wish there may be none,” added Gunlöd.

“Poor Vola is speechless,” said Thorna.

“Is she?” exclaimed Vola. “I believe she is not. I was thinking what a set of chicken-hearted souls you are. There will be thirty or forty people, and the redoubtable hreppstiore in among them, and nobody knows who else, for the purpose of attacking two dead men! And here, mother, forsooth, is about to faint because father is about to go; and Thorna is afraid to give advice, lest it should be useless—a very natural scruple. But, bless you! what ails you all? Do you think that Waldi, like the great serpent Midgard, will swallow up the warriors? Heaven forbid that such valiant men should be thus destroyed. For shame! make haste away, you that are going; and after you have performed your exploits, make haste home, that our ears may be filled with sounds of victory, and vaunts of warlike deeds. If you had a township to storm, or a castle to take, I should like to be commander: but, really, I should be ashamed to follow or lead such an expedition as this.”

“My dear Vola,” said Thorna, “you prove

yourself free from one defect by exhibiting another — you convince us that you are not speechless by talking folly."

" You do not know," added Gudbrand, " how many companions these men may have: the task may be more difficult than you imagine."

" I knew that it would be dangerous," said Gunlög, with some agitation, " therefore, my dear Gudbrand and Eggert stay at home. If any harm were to happen, I should never forgive myself for suffering you to go."

" Now, this is the way," exclaimed Gudbrand, half vexed, " we cannot avoid one evil without falling into another: thus, in endeavouring to convince Gunlög that the undertaking is not dangerous, Vola is convinced that it is trifling and even ridiculous: and in endeavouring to remove this impression the fears of Gunlög are again excited."

Just at this moment, the hreppstjörn, with some of the neighbours, came in to make inquiry about the adventure on the mountains. After a little conversation, it was agreed that

the party should arm themselves, and start in the morning.

The farmers of Sida slept but little that night; and most of them were stirring soon after sunrise. Each one took his strongest horse, and furnished himself with what weapons he could muster; and really, the township, in a little time, assumed a very warlike appearance. About forty persons were mounted, armed with guns, swords, spears, and pistols; while one of the number had fixed a drum (which was beaten when the prefect presided in the court of justice) on the neck of his charger; and taking the lead, the cavalcade proceeded towards the scene of action, amidst the clamour of hoarse voices, the shrill cries of women, the rolling of the drum, the neighing and prancing of horses, the clangor of accoutrements, &c.; the whole of which was nearly enough to have dismayed a formidable band of opponents.

In about three hours the troop arrived on the spot where the contest had occurred. The wounded men were gone; but there were stains of blood on the ground, which could be tracked

for a considerable distance, until, at last, they were lost among spiry grass. After searching unsuccessfully, for the retreat of the robbers, it was agreed that the company should be divided into parties of three or four each, which should scour the country in all directions. The drummer was placed on an elevated point, for the purpose of calling the warriors together when necessary.

Eggert and his companions did not ascend the mountains. but explored some of the lower ground. They were obliged to dismount; and, as the place was dangerous for the horses—instead of tying them together, agreeably with the usual practice — they left them in charge of one of their number ; while the other three descended a steep and dreary way to a dell, where they wandered about for a long time, without seeing a living creature, or any kind of habitation : at last, they discovered a little nook or cavern. One of the party looked in, but could see nothing; then he stepped in, and feeling something soft beneath his feet, started back with instinctive dread, on which he slid

and fell on what was immediately discovered to be a dead body ! He was so much alarmed that he could not rise ; and his hurried attempts to do so, only threw him —as by a perverse fate— more completely on the corpse. His companions, seeing his condition, and roused from their temporary stupor, pulled him out. The party staid not a moment longer, but hurried back, and told what they had seen. It was supposed that the haunt of the robbers was not far distant, and about twenty men were selected for the purpose of proceeding to the dell. On their arrival, the sight of the body — which was that of a female and, doubtless, murdered — occasioned a general thrill of horror ; and after the first impression excited an eager desire to discover the murderers.

The scenery around the party was wild in the extreme. Huge masses of rock appeared to have been thrown promiscuously together ; and overhanging precipices threatened the spectator with immediate destruction. The gleaming of the sun in some parts was finely contrasted with the deep shades in others ; and

so were the blue heavens with the rugged, unsightly rocks. Here and there a patch of verdure was to be seen, with a few stunted shrubs, while a dashing stream of water — murmuring among rocks, or frothing along in narrow channels, or falling in miniature cascades of a dark glassy appearance — was finally lost in the remote part of the dell.

The party had not long been engaged in exploring when they discovered a subterranean passage, which was entered by Eggert, the *hreppstjorð*, and three others, while the rest kept guard without. The passage was dark, but tolerably high. Within a minute or two they perceived light, and came out on a piece of meadow-ground, on which were several horses and cows feeding ; but no human habitation was visible. In a short time, the adventurers discovered another passage, and entering it came into a little court, the boundary of which was formed of precipices, and the ground of sand that had been washed from the rocks. On one side of the court there were two or three huts : the door of the outer one was

closed, and Eggert knocked at it, but received no answer. Just then a man and woman were seen to flit across the remote part of the court and enter a chasm in the precipice; and, although one of the party went in pursuit of them, they could not be found. Eggert knocked at the door a second time, but received no answer, on which he forced it open. While doing so, he perceived some one rising from a bed of straw in one corner of the apartment; the very man, Waldi Freyde, for whom he and his party were searching. He sprang in, exclaiming, "This is the fellow!" and grasped him before he had risen. Eggert's companions rushed in and bound the robber, who could make little resistance, for he was evidently weak.

"Where are your companions?" cried Eggert.

"I do n't know: I have none."

"None? I am sure you have—I know you have companions. Where are they?"

In the mean time one of the men had summoned the rest of the troop, who came and crowded about the door. The hreppstiore

examined his pistol, and finding it right, held it at the fellow's head, and said, in a hoarse, determined voice, "Now, villain! no lying; or, as sure as God is in heaven, I will blow your brains out! How many companions have you?"

Waldi was unused to fear; but there was evidently a resolved spirit in the officer of the law: hence, as valour exists only when mixed with discretion, he began to relent from his dogged, perverse secrecy: he grew pale, and his lip quivered, while he answered, "Only two, a man and a woman."

"Who is the man?" inquired the officer.
"He that was with you last night?"

"Yes."

"Who is the woman?"

"I do n't know: or, at least, she came from Norway."

"Where are they gone?"

"I do n't know."

"Do n't know?" thundered the interrogator,
"you do know!"

"They are run off: that's all I know."

“ Have you any accomplices in the house? Speak the truth, or your life shall answer for it.”

“ No: I hav’ n’t any,” he replied: “ sometimes there are five or six. O !” he exclaimed, with an oath, “ let go. Do n’t hold so tight.”

“ Then remain still,” said one of the men, who was holding him.

“ Where are the five or six men ?” inquired the hreppstiore.

“ They are gone to the north.”

Just at that moment a rattling sound was heard.

“ What noise is that ?” cried the officer.

Waldi became pale and agitated. The faint sound of a human voice was distinguished.

“ Let us see what it is,” said Eggert.

He entered a passage, and removed a shutter, which served as a door for a cave, and immediately within, there was, standing erect and close against him, something like a human being. But what was it? Eggert started back, with an involuntary exclamation of horror. The form remained motionless, except that it gently moved its hand. The attention of all

was riveted by it, and all stood gazing without uttering a word. It was a tall, dirty, emaciated creature, which seemed unconscious of what was passing around it. One of its legs was fastened by a chain to the ground, and one of its arms, by a thong to its waist."

"Let us make Waldi," said some one, "tell us who this wretched creature is?"

Two or three turned back to question Waldi, and found that he had left his bed, and, having extricated one of his hands, was wriggling himself out at the door-way. The men sprang on him, and, seizing him, flung him like a log on the straw. The hreppstiorè went to the door and discharged his pistol; then, loading it, he held it to the breast of the robber. "Now, one word wrong, thou foul wretch," he roared, "and I will send thy soul to judgment! Who is that poor creature in the cavern?"

Waldi was become desperate: he would not speak.

"Speak, villain!" thundered the interrogator. "Speak! Will you speak? By heaven! I will fire!"

The robber treated the menace with contempt ; and the hreppstiorè, in a rage, snapped the pistol, but the flint merely struck fire. On examination, it was found that the priming had been forgotten.

“ Thank God ! ” cried the officer ; “ the villain shall die a harder death — he shall die by the hand of justice.”

In the mean time, the poor maniac had left the doorway, and seated himself in the centre of the cave. The place was rather dark, even when the doorway was open, and very filthy. While he sat here, he seized a bone, and began to gnaw it, as if perishing with hunger.

Something now required to be done — and done quickly, for evening was approaching ; consequently, the arm of the insane youth was secured that he might do no injury ; a cloak was thrown over him, and he was led away. A frame-work, consisting of two poles and a plank, was made for Waldi, who was bound to it and carried off. The premises were searched, but no one could be discovered, and the party returned to the main body. Another cave had

been observed immediately behind that in which the youth was found.

While the Sida people were at Waldi's house, they were so much engaged, that they scarcely thought of the corpse; but now, on passing it, the hreppstiorè turned to the robber, and pointing to the cavern, exclaimed, "Villain! What is that?"

Waldi became pale, but turned away his face, and said nothing.

When the party rejoined their companions, there was no little surprise, and even horror excited in the latter, at what they saw and heard. All things, however, were got ready, as soon as possible; the robber and the young man were placed on horseback, and the cavalcade set out for Sida. It was nearly dusk when it approached the parish; but the residents — men, women, and children, excepting those in the mountains with the flocks — were gathered in the township. The sound of the drum gave notice of its approach, and the people set out to meet it. Old Gudbrand was one of the first horsemen, and Thorna one of the first pedes-

trians. When they met, "Child," said the old man, "we are all safe." Thorna ran back to give the pleasing intelligence to her mother, who was hurrying on in the rear of the party. "All safe! all safe!" rang delightfully through the multitude; and this was immediately followed by "Thank God!"

The horsemen stopped near Gudbrand's dwelling; and not a head was covered while the old man, in an audible voice, thanked the Supreme Being for preserving them, and giving them success.

The robber was placed under the care of the *kreppstiorè*; the youth was put into an apartment of Gudbrand's house; and the adventurers returned to their homes, accompanied by their relatives and friends.

CHAP. V.

THE residence of the Sysselman * of the district was not far from Sida ; and the court-house was close to his dwelling. On the morning after the party had returned, Waldi Freyde was taken to the court, and examined by the Sysselman. The particulars need not now be related, because they will be given in the account of the trial. The court adjourned until the afternoon of the following day, when the body of the murdered female was expected to be brought from the cave.

On the next morning early, Eggert and four companions set off for Waldi Freyde's dwelling. They had one spare horse, on which was a long wicker basket for the dead body. When they arrived near the place of descent, they tied their horses together, and taking the basket,

* Magistrate or Justice of the peace.

descended into the dell. Before the body was touched, they went to Waldi's house, but found it empty; for some one had been there, and carried away the bedding and other removeable articles. The party now entered the chasm, at a little distance from the dwelling, through which the man and woman had escaped on the first day; but they could, for some time, perceive no place of exit. At last, they accidentally discovered a large stone, which, moving on a pivot, served as a door. On pulling it round, a subterranean passage was seen, which they entered and endeavoured to explore in the dark; but, being unable to proceed, they procured a torch, and went onward until they came to a spacious chamber; the sides of which consisted of black glossy stone, and the roof of irregular arches studded with dark blue and red stalactytes, among which were innumerable crystals of various colours. When another torch was lighted, the effect was singular and beautiful, for blue, red, and purple rays flashed from a thousand points, and dazzled the eyes

of the spectators, so that they could not perceive the black, damp walls and wet ground; and hence, the whole appeared like a region of enchantment. The imagination, too, gave something like form to obscurity, and even in Eggert's opinion — as he afterwards observed, "It seemed like the hall of Odin."

The party now, being fairly in the midst of the cavern, and not knowing scarcely how they came in, knew not how to get out. One of them, having groped his way at a little distance from the light, thought he had discovered the cleft by which he had entered — for there were several around the apartment — and going into it, came in contact with something which drew away from him. Alarmed, he staggered back, and cried, "Here, Eggert, Wigfus, Jorundr ! a light ! a light ! there 's something here."

Eggert and his companions ran to the spot, and found a woman cowering on the ground, wrapped in a wadmal cloak.

"In the name of God !" he cried, " who are you ?"

The woman remained silent.

“ Who are you,?” cried Eggert, “ What are you doing here?”

The woman muttered something ; and Eggert caught hold of her.

“ What are you doing here ?” he again inquired.

The woman mumbled a few words, but nothing was distinguished but an oath.

“ This,” said Jon Sterinderson, “ is one of the same — ”

He was suddenly interrupted by a tall figure, who burst from the shades of the cavern, and exclaimed in an almost sepulchral voice, “ O ! if ye are friends, for the sake of God, take me under your care !” She remained for some moments motionless, with her eyes fixed on the party, who were speechless and almost nerveless. Then, suddenly becoming convinced that they were friends and not foes, she looked upwards, and raising her hands, exclaimed, “ I thank thee, thou kind and benevolent Parent, for sending me help in my distress !”

During this time, the Sida men appeared to be rivetted to the earth, and their attention was

so much absorbed, that they forgot the woman in the wadmal cloak ; and it was only when the spectre cried, “ See ! see ! that cruel woman is escaping,” that Eggert looked around, and found she was stealing away. He uttered a cry of execration, and springing on her, prevented her departure.

The stranger, observing the effect which she had produced, said, “ Do not be alarmed at my appearance, which I know is singular, and my apparel is bloody, but this is owing to a wound on my hand, which was given me by that woman.”

“ Who are you ?” inquired Eggert. “ How did you come here ?”

“ My name is Galmina Thordalston. I have been here, I believe, a long time ; but I thank God that there is now a prospect of liberation.”

She was much agitated, and almost incapable of standing. Eggert took her by the hand, and led her to a block of stone. “ Sit down,” said he. “ You are now, thank heaven ! safe. We were sent by the Sysselman ; and are extremely happy that we were induced to come here.”

The stranger appeared to be about eighteen ; and when she had washed the blood from her face, in a stream which ran through the cavern, and had begun to exhibit some of her natural graces — although exhausted by fear and cruel treatment — she was exceedingly attractive — her person seemed to be moulded with sylph-like delicacy, and her face, in Eggert's opinion, was superior to that of Thorna or Vola. Her blue eyes, occasionally, were animated and sparkling, but they soon sunk to the dull temperature of sorrow. Her yellow hair, however, exhibited none of these defects : its profuse and beautifully curling tresses, somewhat disordered, alternately gleamed and sunk into shade, with every movement of her person.

The robber-woman, who had been held by two of the party, now became restive and noisy.

“ Serve her as we did Waldi,” cried Eggert.
“ Tie her hands and feet.”

“ Is Waldi in your custody ? ” eagerly inquired the maiden.

“ Yes,” said he.

“ Thank God,” she replied. And then, she

added, the tears starting in her eyes, “I have, somewhere hereabout, a brother and a sister.”

Eggert’s soul froze when he heard those words; but, assuming as well as he could an air of cheerfulness, he said, “Do not be anxious about them.”

“O ! but I have cause to be anxious,” she replied: and then, clasping her hands, she lifted her eyes, and exclaimed, “O God ! who hast preserved me, do preserve those who are dear to me !”

Eggert’s heart was not very susceptible of tender impressions; but tears stood in his eyes while he listened to the maiden, and one of the men wept like a child. Eggert knew that it would be wrong to indulge painful feelings, and starting up, said, “Now, let us return to Waldi’s house.” The place of exit was soon discovered: Eggert assisted the young stranger out of the cavern; and two or three men, by pulling and pushing, contrived to get the robber-woman out.

Having arrived at Waldi’s dwelling, the prisoner was secured with cords, and put into the cave whence the youth was taken. The men of

Sida, with the liberated Galmina, sat down in the outer apartment, when Eggert opened his store of provisions, and each one began to eat something, excepting the maiden, who could be persuaded only to sip a little *blanda*.* Her anxiety for her brother and sister was now very great, and Eggert scarcely knew how he could convey both Galmina and the dead body to Sida.

During the repast, the maiden informed Eggert that a subterranean passage led from the cavern into a series of chasms and gullies extending as far as Loke's Well; at which place, she believed, there were two or three men, one of whom had been in the cavern that morning; and, from what had occurred, she had reason to suppose that he was consulting with the woman to take away her (the maiden's) life. "After the man had left," she added, "the woman struck me with a sharp instrument across the hand, for the purpose, probably, of inducing me to resist; and then, if I had done so, she would

* Whey mixed with water.

have taken my life. I have heard of instances," continued the maiden, "wherein the most villainous have been unable to gratify their bloody wishes, without some show of resistance on the part of the victim. It seems to be kindly ordered by Providence, that helplessness, as well as strength, should be a barrier, and indeed a firm one, to the designs of the wicked."

"When a person, fair lady!" observed Ion Sterinderson, "is not completely sunk into wickedness, both helplessness and virtue are checks to his evil wishes. But this arises from certain remains of moral goodness. We love virtue, and know that it is cowardly to attack weakness; but when a man has descended into the very dregs of villainy, he cares for none of these things. (For what is sinking, in this case, but sinking out of sight of every thing virtuous and excellent?) Selfishness — low, cruel, lustful selfishness — is his god! Whatever is good and lovely he hates; and if he hurts it not, it is because he cannot: whatever is helpless he attacks, that it may yield to his wishes. The good man is regulated by moral rather than

physical influences: the lowest of the low is curbed by physical power alone — he is a slave to the most abject vices — he fears not God, nor regards man."

Eggert did not wish to have a disquisition on morals, although Galmina evidently listened with much attention, and with some surprise to the speaker. "Ion Sterinderson," said Eggert, "is reckoned a kind of philosopher in our parish; but we have no time now, I think, for philosophy." Then he called his companions out of the room, under a pretence of looking for the horses, but in reality to arrange future proceedings. It was agreed that one should return to Sida with the news; another stay with Galmina; and the other three, among whom was Eggert, should penetrate to Loke's Well.

When, however, on re-entering the room, Eggert expressed an intention of going to the well, Galmina endeavoured to dissuade him: "for," said she, "you will find it difficult and perhaps dangerous."

"We must go," replied Eggert: "the re-

mainder of the gang will fly, when they discover that we have been to the cavern — a place which they fancied free from intrusion: besides, we may be able to hear something of your brother and sister."

"Then," said she, rising from her seat, "go by all means. I will go with you."

"Oh! no," cried Eggert, "you had better not go."

"I will," said Galmina, with much firmness; "as sure as there is a Divine Providence to overlook and preserve us, I will go. I am ashamed of having been thus neglectful of my dear Thord and Lara. Do you not," said she, addressing Eggert, "consider it great neglect? But my nerves are so much disordered, that I scarcely know what I am about — I seem to have awoke from a dream. It was on this account I forgot, for a moment, my dear brother and sister; and for the same reason, I have not, as much as I ought, thanked you, my kind benefactor, and those who accompanied you in your Christian engagement."

Eggert was so much perplexed by the several

matters now mentioned, that he could make no reply: he merely stammered out something about the smallness of his merit in the affair; and he let her take her own way in regard to the well. Besides, as the party would gain one man by this arrangement, and Galmina knew the route, there seemed to be more advantage than disadvantage connected with it.

In a few minutes, the company was once more in the subterranean chamber, which Galmina entered, not without an involuntary shudder. The maiden led them to a passage, almost hid by a projecting stone; and, after groping along with some difficulty, they came to a narrow fissure in the mountain, which barely allowed two persons to walk abreast; and was so deep, that only a gleaming of light was perceived high over head: the heavens were of a dark blue, and the twinkling stars were visible. “O!” said Galmina, looking up, “I did not perceive that the other day, when I was brought into this place. But how singular is the sensation, when we perceive the sun withdrawn from us in the day, and the stars twinkling on us !”

“ It is,” said Ion Sterinderson, who was one of the party,” exactly agreeable with human experience. When we are elevated, the full tide of light rolls around us; but when we are sunk into deep troubles—hemmed in on every side—we have only the gleaming of a star or two.”

“ This,” observed Eggert, “ reminds me of what Sira Gudmerson said on Sunday last:—‘ When the full light of Heaven beams on men, they think little of it—they esteem it an ordinary affair, and are not grateful for it; but if this is withdrawn, and a solitary star glimmers forth, they perceive the importance of light, and are thankful even for a star. Thus, as much gratitude arises to Heaven for small blessings as for great ones; and, perhaps, God is more thanked in the hour of adversity than in that of prosperity.’ ”

“ That appears to be very true,” said Galmina.

“ Yes,” said Ion; “ I thought so, when I heard the clergyman mention it.”

The pathway in the rent of the mountain

now began to ascend, and at length brought the travellers out on the brink of a dizzy precipice. They were obliged to take a circuitous route, which was not free from danger, before they arrived at, what was termed, the valley of rocks. This was very deep, very black, and very vapourous in some parts, owing to the bituminous pools which abounded in it. Vast masses of black rocks were seen on every hand, piled to a great height, and, in some instances, it appeared as if the loosening of one would cause the vast structure to thunder to the bottom. Indeed, it seemed as if a breeze might almost dislodge some of the projecting masses. The steam issued from the pools with a hissing noise, and formed itself into lofty columns — for the air was perfectly calm. After the adventurers had passed through this valley and two or three lesser ones, they came to a fissure terminating in a subterranean passage. "This," said Galmina, "is the end of our journey."

The feelings of the adventurers may be easily imagined. They were approaching a place, which was supposed to be haunted by genii

and fiends ; hence no small degree of fear was excited ; and each seemed willing that any little obstacle should prevent further progress, while each was ashamed to make a proposal of returning. Galmina perceived this, and, resolutely pushing forward, placed herself at the head of the party. Who now could fear, when a lovely maiden was the leader ? The party became animated with courage ; they pushed onward regardless of men or evil spirits.

It is natural for woman to be timid of encountering danger ; but when danger has been fairly met—owing perhaps to the reality being less formidable than the anticipation — woman is generally persevering. In many instances, when men are bold and heroic, they are so from a desire of pleasing the other sex : this, however, is not the case with woman.

“ I believe,” said the conductress, “ there are not more than two or three men in this place. I hope we may find Lara and Thord here.”

The passage was dark, but tolerably even. In a minute or two Galmina said, “ Now, we are come.” There was a door made of wicker-

work, matted with straw, which guarded the entrance. The party remained silent for a few moments, and heard a voice within, but could not distinguish what was said. The maiden was requested to stand back; while the men placed themselves in readiness to rush in, as soon as the barrier should be broken down. Two men, with a jerk, accomplished this, and the others sprang in. A man, who was sitting by a fire, in the centre of the room, was seized, and immediate search was made for others, but none could be found besides an old man, apparently in the last stage of sickness, on a miserable bed. It is melancholy when poverty is the pillow of the dying person, but it is still more so if that pillow is not smoothed by religious consolations! This old man seemed to have grown gray in the ways of sin. One of the party was about to seize him, but he uttered a deep groan, which, as Eggert turned to preserve him from interference, struck to his heart — it was the same kind of groan as he had heard when he was on the moss-gathering expedition! There was no time, however, for reflection; all

was hurry and confusion. Eggert turned to the man, who had been seized by the party on entering, and exclaimed "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

At that moment, Galmina came forward, and said, "This is Oddur."

"Ah! so it is," exclaimed Eggert; "but I thought you were wounded."

"No, not much," replied the fellow.

"He is the man," said Galmina, "who came into the cavern this morning; and it was he, with Waldi and others, that seized my poor brother and sister." Then, addressing him, with much earnestness, she inquired, "Where are they?"

Oddur looked confused, but made no reply.

"You know where they are," said Galmina. "O! do tell me!"

Eggert now interfered. "Is there any one here," he inquired, "besides you and the old man?"

"No," he replied, sullenly.

Eggert was afraid to put any more questions while Galmina was present, and still more

afraid for the maiden to do so; he led her out, therefore, on a ledge of rocks, at the side of Loke's Well, into which Thorna and her companions had looked; and, from the lower part of which, Eggert had fancied the groan proceeded. He told her that it would be necessary to bind Oddur, and to remove the old man; hence it would be better for her to sit on a stone-bench, to which he led her, until these matters were completed. The falling sheet of water — which has been already described — very bright and glistening in the upper, but dark in the lower part, fell, with a thundering noise, on the rock which divided it, at no great distance from her; while, in the centre of the gulf, columns of smoke ascended from bituminous pools, which were bubbling, and muttering, and hissing in an appalling manner. Galmina did not sit down, nor take much notice of the terrific scenery around her, but walked to and fro, in great agitation, thinking on her lost brother and sister.

Eggert re-entered the cavern. "What ails the old man?" said he to Oddur.

“ He received a hurt two or three weeks ago.”

“ How ?”

“ He was sitting on a bench outside, when a rock fell ; and in falling, struck off a piece, which hit the old man’s shoulder.”

Oddur went forward, and pulling aside a rug, exhibited the invalid, with his shoulder buried in bandages.

“ Who is he ?” inquired Eggert.

“ Why, sometimes,” said Oddur, carelessly, “ Waldi used to call him father ; and at other times said he was no father to him but only in wickedness.”

“ Hush !” said Eggert, as he observed the countenance of the old man become very ghastly. One of the party, who was looking on him, said, softly, “ That countenance indicates nothing but guilt and misery.”

This, however, was not so soft but that it was overheard by the wretched man, who seemed painfully alive to his awful condition, and the whispers of condemnation. For the first time, he opened his mouth, then stared

abroad vacantly, then drew up his right arm, and holding it for a moment in the air, threw it with violence on the bed. He had moved his lips, but could not speak. Then, with preternatural vigour, he raised himself half up, stared wildly around, and beholding, apparently, something terrific, he uttered a dreadful shriek, fell back, and died !

The spectators, excepting Oddur who seemed to be callous, were horror struck. At this moment, Galmina was about to enter the cave ; but Eggert rushed out and prevented her, while the others covered the old man with a rug.

Preparations were now made for departing. The hands of Oddur were tied, and he was taken into the passage, on the way back to Waldi's house. Eggert followed, close after, with Galmina.

“ Oh ! ” she exclaimed, as she passed through the cave, “ Lara and Thord must be here somewhere. Do allow me, if it be only for a moment, to search for them.”

“ You may depend on it, they are not here,” said Eggert.

“ You cannot tell that,” replied the distracted maiden ; and then, drawing back, she began to call “ Thord ! Lara !” as loud as she could ; but there was no answer. When she stepped outside and called, she heard an echo replying ‘ Thord ! Lara !’ “ There,” she exclaimed, with an animated countenance, “ some one is answering. Oh ! I hope — ”

“ That is only an echo,” said Eggert. “ Come ; do come away ; the rest of the party are gone.”

The maiden, with much reluctance, accompanied Eggert, and then burst into tears, exclaiming, “ Where can my dear Thord and Lara be ? I thought I should have found them here !” Then she called Oddur, in order to inquire of him : but he, fortunately, either could not, or would not, hear.

During the walk, which was toilsome, Eggert kept Galmina considerably behind the rest of the party, that she might ask no questions of them. When they had ascended two-thirds of the precipice, they heard a cry, and looking up saw some one struggling on the edge of the cliff. Eggert screamed, and ran up the path-

way. In a moment, two men (who proved to be Oddur and poor Ion Sterinderson) grasping each other, came down whirring near them, and then, parted from each other, sunk to the base of the precipice. After the short, dead sound which attended the striking of the bodies on the ground, nothing was heard, and not a movement was made. Where each one stood, when the tragical event occurred, he continued to stand; and where each eye lighted after glancing instantaneously from the middle of the precipice to the dusky base, there it remained — vacantly fixed. O God ! it was an awful event — It was an awful pause that followed. At last, almost mechanically, Eggert and his companions descended to the place where the dead bodies lay. Alas ! poor Ion Sterinderson — a man much respected and much beloved.

“ O ! ” said Snorro Jefnerson, the tears starting in his eyes, “ Freira kissed her husband when he left this morning, and said, ‘ A short absence, dear Ion, makes meeting more pleasant.’ And his little prattling ones called after him as he rode away. Poor Freira ! it will be ” — The

tears of the listeners increased the excitement of the speaker, he could proceed no further; and all sobbed aloud.

After some time Eggert said, "It will be better to bring the basket here, and to put the body of poor Ion into it."

Two of the men set off for the basket, while the rest sat on the rocks, and scarcely spoke. In about half an hour, the men were seen approaching; and when they arrived, and the basket was thrown on the ground, Eggert, for the first time, inquired how the poor fellow had fallen over the precipice.

"We were a little behind," said one of them, "and Ion was leading Oddur. The path was so narrow that only two could walk abreast. Oddur was on the outside; and one of his arms becoming loose, he endeavoured to push Ion back, that he might spring over. Ion seized him; he grasped the poor fellow in return; and before we could run up, both went over the precipice."

With much difficulty, the basket with the body was conveyed up the steep pathway; then

it was carried through the passages into the subterranean apartment, and brought out near Waldi's house, just as a large party of persons arrived from Sida. The gloomy countenances and fatigued appearance of the men conveying the basket excited anxious curiosity in the newly arrived visitors. Old Gudbrand was not among them, but the hreppstiorè was.

“ What now ? ” said he to Eggert. “ How is the basket here ? Who is this ? ” he added, pointing to Galmina, who was coming on greatly fatigued in the rear.

“ Ah ! ” replied Eggert, “ what we have in the basket is not what we came for. — It is, ” he added, the tears starting in his eyes, ” the dead body of poor Ion Sterinderson.”

The hard features of the hreppstiorè were relaxed ; he became pale, and his lips quivered. One and another came to the basket, and seeing what was there, sobbed piteously. It was a melancholy sight. It is of course distressing when a woman weeps ; but when a man does so — when the frame of the stronger sex is convulsed with sorrow — the sight is still more affecting.

In the midst of all, however, Eggert did not forget the critical circumstances in which Galmina was placed: and, lest she should hear any thing respecting the fate of her relatives, he persuaded her to go with him into Waldi's house. He begged one of his companions to explain the affair to the hreppstiore, and to make arrangements for returning to Sida immediately. Galmina was continually referring to her brother and sister, and Eggert did what he could to soothe her; indeed, he was interested in no ordinary degree with the distressed maiden.

It was arranged that all should return, without delay, to the place where the horses had been left; and that the dead body of Ion Sterinderson should be conveyed to Sida on the horse which had been intended for the murdered female. Eggert took Galmina under his protection. The woman was pulled out from the cave amidst the execrations of the people; and the train having returned to the hill, and mounted on horseback, with sorrowful hearts proceeded towards Sida.

CHAP. VI.

LET us now turn for a moment from the travellers to the maniac. It is probable that when he was found in Waldi Freyde's dwelling, he was in a state of exhaustion, of stupid bewilderment, after a long and violent paroxysm; for it was afterwards discovered that he had been subject to those attacks in the cave; and on this account, the robbers had intended, on the very day that the Sida people arrived, to have put him to death. On his way towards Sida, he seemed sometimes to be indifferent to every thing, and sometimes to be tolerably sane. A species of convulsion accompanied these changes — his face was distorted, and, on some occasions, he was seized all over with muscular spasms.

When he arrived at Gudbrand's house, he was treated with care and tenderness. He was

put into a warm bed, and as he seemed hungry, warm milk and bread were brought to him, which he ate ravenously. His principal nurse was Thorna, who was acquainted with herbs useful for mental disorders, and she gave him some. Indeed, so powerfully were the inmates of the house excited in his favour, that each one was anxious to do him service. Vola was generally active in benevolent engagements, but she was uncertain: sometimes she began too late, and, at other times, concluded too soon; but, when she properly timed her services, no one could be more useful. Good old Gunlöt was pretty much inclined, on most occasions, to moralise on the evils of life; and sometimes — perhaps, too frequently — to lament over them, rather than combat them — to apply moral instead of physical remedies for corporeal ills. She was an illustration of the fact — or as much so as a half can be an illustration of a whole — that the human race are divided into two great classes, those who use their hands and those who use their tongues. However, she might be allowed to lament over

the case of the youth, who had, by a series of singular events, been brought to her dwelling, and to confine herself to that; for the case was distressing, and there were several good helpers of a practical kind, among whom were Gudbrand, Eggert, and the domestics of the house.

The hands and feet of the maniac were tied, and he was bound to the bed that he might do no harm. Two or three of the household remained up during the night, and one of the number staid in the room with him. He had been, or was supposed to have been asleep; and Thorna was sitting in the apartment reading, when suddenly, with almost supernatural strength, he burst the bandages which held his arms, and sprang up in the bed. Thorna was terrified; she screamed for assistance, and the household rushed into the room. The maniac had not succeeded in liberating his feet, and hence he was confined to the bed, but it was difficult for three or four to hold him. His cheeks were alternately deathlike and deeply flushed; his lips varied in a similar manner; his eyes flashed fire at one moment, and at the

next were lustreless; his teeth chattered and gnashed, while his mouth was fringed with foam; he talked occasionally with great vehemence, but unintelligibly; at length, there was a sudden turn, and he seemed to be overcome with terror — “There! there!” he screamed, “See what they are doing! Look! that is my dear Lara. That is my lovely sister. Lara! why do you sit there? Come, come to me, I will defend you. Is any one hurting you? Stand back! Now, that is Waldi. Ah! he is a dark cursed villain. He is dark, black: his hair is black: black as a hempa*: black, black as a horse tail. Ha! ha! ha!”

The transition from the most gloomy thoughts to merriment, was so different from any thing which the household had witnessed, that they began to quake with superstitious horror. The effect was increased when the maniac, lowering his voice to a kind of sepulchral murmur, said, “Look — look — they are going to kill her! Look at Oddur, with his dark scowling face. There is murder in it. Look at Lara! There she sits like a statue. I saw her soul fly from her,

* A cloak of black cloth.

and ascend into the skies, and the clouds opened to receive it. There, now it is returned: she is animated with life, her cheeks are flushed, her eyes are full of tenderness. O !” he screamed, after a pause, “ What was that? I heard a blow on her dear head. My tender Lara, never mind. There ! there is another blow ! and see ! the blood is streaming from her nose and ears. Shall they ?” he exclaimed with great energy; and springing up, he burst from the grasp of his three male attendants—for the females had flown—and sprang into the middle of the room. “ Now, here,” said he, “ I will stand: and I will give them fair play. I see they mean to kill Lara; and when they have done that, I will kill them. I will — I will kill them ! There ! look ! Oddur is tying a piece of cord around Lara’s neck. It shall not — it shall not be !” he cried; and springing with great violence at the imaginary ruffian, almost stunned himself against the wall. He was taken up, and put into the bed, and fastened more firmly than before. The train of exciting imagery was now broken: he was quiet as an infant.

CHAP. VII.

WHILE the hreppstiorè and his company were proceeding to Sida, they were frequently shocked at the conduct of the robber-woman. She seemed not only to unsex herself, as it respects modesty and delicacy, but to disregard every thing, human or divine, which a virtuous person would regard. When she was ridiculing some of the party, and talking profanely, the clergyman of Sida, who had come out with the hreppstiorè and others, checked her saying, that he was grieved and ashamed to see such conduct in a woman.

“ Ashamed !” exclaimed the wretch. “ Let me go my own way, and travel as I please ; and then I ’ll behave as well as you ; or at least, you ’ll not be there to be ashamed.”

“ If you had behaved as you ought,” replied the clergyman, “ you would not have been here.”

“I believe,” said the woman, “I have behaved too well. Better, I know many times, than I would now, if I had them to go over again. I have lost many a fair gain because I would not behave too bad.”

“I am sorry to hear you talk so. It is a bad disposition of mind, when people, instead of lamenting that they have done no better, lament that they have done no worse. But, I intreat you, reflect on your condition. You will not, perhaps, continue long in this world; and you must know that repentance — true, humble repentance — is necessary, if you would escape a worse evil than the law can give you.”

“Now do not,” said the woman, “plague me about religion. None but cowards talk about it.”

“I suppose,” replied the clergyman, “you have associated with the worst of characters only — with men who have despised morality and religion; and who, when they were sick, became gloomy and fearful of death. It is cowardly to despise death at a distance, and to

fear him when he is present: but it is not so to make preparation for death, as the true Christian does, and to meet him with a calm countenance."

"I don't know any thing about it," said the woman; "but I hate religion, and all the hypocrites that love it."

"I am sorry, for your sake, that you hate it. However, it is a powerful argument in favour of religion, that it is hated, not by the virtuous but the vicious. In proportion as a man is morally good he loves it; and in proportion as he sinks into baseness, he hates it. Thus, in the same degree, as he himself is odious, he fancies, or affects to fancy, that religion is odious."

"I know little about it," said the woman; "and I don't wish to know more. When our time comes we must die, and there's an end of it."

"No, that's the beginning of it: for after this life there will be another — a life of enjoyment or misery. Do you believe this?"

"I don't understand much about it. You

have had more teaching than I have; and there is no requirement of the ignorant."

" You are not ignorant. I have told you that there is a Heaven and a Hell; and that there will be a day of Judgment. Besides, you knew this: you have no excuse."

" I believe I must run the risk of it. I know many worse than I am; for I never murdered any one: and, if I have, at any time, helped to take a trifle from the rich, you know as well as I the poor must live: — we wer'n't brought into the world to starve."

" I hope it may be found that you never took away the life of a fellow creature; and that you never assisted any who did such a horrid deed: but, even then, will that excuse you for a life of crime? Thus it is too frequently with human beings, — they acquit themselves and even pride themselves on being less wicked than they might be; they do not consider how much less virtuous they are than they might be. However, God did not create men to starve or plunder; but, as far as wordly occupation is concerned, to work and gain an honest main-

tenance; and, where this is not gained, the cause is indolence or vice; unless sickness intervene, which, of course, is not always to be avoided."

They were now obliged to travel singly and with care, for the path was narrow, and situated on the edge of a precipice, beneath which there was a deep ravine studded with black, weather-beaten rocks, which (as the clergyman afterwards quaintly remarked) seemed to have been aged when the upland was created. From its dark, rocky prison, a stream burst forth, glistening and leaping to the depths below, forming a singular contrast with the awful gloom and stillness of the surrounding scenery.

It has been mentioned that Eggert had taken Galmina under his care; for the unhappy maiden, like an exotic in a withering clime, required support: and though Eggert was not the best qualified to counsel or sympathise with the distresses of a sensitive mind, yet he was honest-hearted, and on the whole a worthy fellow; hence Galmina was pleased with him. Attachment or love, without doubt, assumes a

THE CURATE OF STEINHOLLT.
vast variety of forms. The distance is great indeed, from its lowest or dubious state to its greatest height. But Galmina was not adapted for the former: she was gifted with that delicate sense of the affections (more delicate than either the corporeal or intellectual sense) which enables the possessor to see, hear, taste, and feel, the refinements of love: but it was not so with Eggert. It is fortunate, perhaps, that high refinement of feeling is not prevalent—it is little adapted for the atmosphere of life; it was appropriate for the bowers of Eden, and will be for the realms of Paradise.

Poor Galmina was much fatigued as she journeymed onward. She had suffered a great deal of agitation. That day, as well as many previous ones, had been full of alarm, and she was longing for mental repose; but whenever hope appeared for a moment—as a star to shoot its radiance across the darkness of night—it was immediately obscured by anxiety and gloom. How pitiable is the condition of a being, who has before him or her, a long dark page of the book of life, on which, as on Ezekiel's

song or sonnet, and though in the olden time, the roll, are written, mourning, lamentation, and woe!

The shadows of night closed around the travellers, as they approached the end of their journey. In order to avoid stir and excitation, it was agreed that the party should divide themselves into small companies, and enter the parish by different routes: thus, almost all arrived unnoticed and quiet at their homes. The woman was taken to the house in which Waldi was confined, and Galmina was welcomed, with true Icelandic hospitality, at the dwelling of Hans Frankusson.

Eggert was obliged to give a long account, and to answer many questions, before he could satisfy his household respecting the events of that singular day.

In the morning, as soon as breakfast was concluded, Vola, without saying a word, went up to Frankusson's house, for the purpose of seeing Galmina. The distressed maiden had just left her room, in which, she said, she had slept but little, for her mind was almost distracted.

“Is that on account of what has happened to your brother and sister?” said Vola.

The countenance of Galmina was, immediately, all excitement. “*Happened?*” she inquired, laying a peculiar stress on the word, “what has *happened* to them? O, for God’s sake! tell me, where are they?”

The family, who had pledged themselves to keep the matter secret, were full of consternation; and Vola discovered that she had, once more, spoken without thinking. Galmina observed the impression which was made on the countenance of her friend; and with much agitation caught hold of Vola, who was turning to leave the house, and, in a gasping hysterical voice, exclaimed, “O! do tell me—Tell me where they are!”

Vola was much confused. “I know not,” said she, “where your sister is.”

“Then you know,” replied Galmina, with much quickness, “where Thord is. Tell me where he is—O! do tell me. If he be alive, I will praise Heaven for it: and if he be dead—O! if he be torn from me—why then I will

go, and lay this bleeding heart on the turf that covers him. My dear girl ! do lead me to him."

Vola moved away, almost mechanically : the people of the house were motionless with astonishment : and the distracted maiden was now on her way, with Vola, to Gudbrand Magnusson's dwelling. As she approached it, she heard Thord's voice — for he was then in a paroxysm of madness. She rushed through the doorway ; traced the sounds to their source ; and burst into the room where Thord was sitting on the bed, pinioned by Eggert and Gudmandr, while Thorna and Gunlöd were standing by. All were startled at the intrusion of the apparition. She sprang to her brother, clasped him around the neck, and uttered the most extravagant expressions of affection. Thord seemed to be thunderstruck, and for a few moments he was sane. " My dear Galmina," he said : but his reason left him, and he began to talk wildly. " This," said he, " is Lara — dear Lara, that I saw murdered ! Ah ! murdered by cruel Waldi ! "

" Murdered ! Good God !" screamed Gal-

mina, looking wildly to Heaven, and fell on the floor in a swoon. She was carried out of the apartment; and much care was necessary for preventing the flickering flame of life from becoming extinct. After Thord had been very outrageous for some time, he fell asleep.

edt no ñet þas, ñerhverf Hestur, galdur, salar-
ðið to með þeitum aðr en Þordur, en ófugl
þið gagnanum aðr er aðr, en ófugl
þið mótt til aðr, en ófugl.

CHAP. VIII.

þeyr heit, bæt þeit, en

IT may be necessary to mention, that when Lara, Galmina, and Thord were seized and carried off by Waldi and his men, they were on their way to the southern coast from Eydal, a small place on the north. Further particulars, however, will be given in subsequent chapters.

In returning, it may be stated that Galmina would not leave her brother; she continued, therefore, in Gudbrand's house, where she was welcomed as an inmate with sincere and warm hospitality. On the day of her arrival, the body of Lara was to be brought from the cave. It was intended to keep Galmina, if possible, ignorant of this matter; but the dreadful communication from her brother had made her intensely anxious respecting the particulars of Lara's death; hence, by degrees, she discovered that her sister would be brought to Sida that evening.

“It will be a melancholy satisfaction,” said she; “but I will look on her again.” Here, as by a hidden spring, her feelings were delicately touched; and although before she had a dry eye and a burning brow, yet now she shed some tears. After a pause, she said, in a determined tone, “Yes, if God preserves me, I will see Lara to-night.”

“My dear Galmina,” said Thorna, “your feelings are quite natural. I lament that there is cause for them. But do not immediately indulge yourself in this melancholy pleasure — Your nerves are too weak. Wait, at least, until to-morrow.”

Galmina became suddenly excited; her cheeks crimsoned, and the full tide of burning thoughts seemed again to burst on her soul. “O!” she cried, “I cannot — I cannot! Her image is now before me; I see her death-stricken face; I hear her dying groans. I must look on the reality if it be only to chase away the imagination. My heart — my heart is full!” Then placing her hands on it, as if, by a mechanical effort, to ease its anguish, she con-

tinued, "I must pour out my sorrows on her dear bosom, or my heart will break!"

The troubles of life fall thickly on many; indeed, some who read this narrative may be affected by them; but as deep shades make others seem lighter, so great evils make lesser ones bearable. Let us, for a moment, look at Galmina—she was stripped of her property, disordered in health, depressed in spirits, at a distance from home; her brother, the "stay" of the family, was a maniac; her sister a mangled, murdered corpse! Surely our troubles, though sometimes heavy, must be light in comparison with those of the unfortunate stranger!

Thorna was desirous of knowing when Galmina had last parted from her sister, but was disinclined to ask: however, the distressed maiden, in the course of conversation, said "It was about six days since that I saw Lara. Her spirits were then depressed. She said, 'My dear Galmina, we know not what we may have to suffer, for these men are wicked and cruel. They have taken away our property, and they

may take away our lives.' Then, with a brightening aspect, and a hopeful glistening eye, she added, ' My dear Galmina, turn your attention, as much as possible, from this melancholy world to a better state. And if these men should shed our blood—God alone knows their purpose!—we shall, I humbly hope, meet in that happy country, where no calamity wounds the heart, and no sorrow darkens the countenance !'

" Just afterwards, we were permitted to have an interview with Thord; but the meeting was painful, for we could anticipate nothing in respect of this world, but misery. While Thord was present, Oddur came and took away Lara. The dear girl kissed me affectionately. Alas! we did not meet again. Not long after, Thord was forced away from me."

Galmina was so much affected whenever she referred to her sister, that Thorna and Vola endeavoured to vary the conversation, and employed various means to cheer her drooping spirits; but as lead sinks in the waters, so her

soul sunk within her. They were afraid sometimes that she would become like her brother.

The day passed on, sunset, midnight, and morning came, but nothing was seen, and no tidings were heard of the three men who had gone to the cave. The people of Sida were full of anxiety, and the wives of the men were running hither and thither to inquire if any one had seen or heard of them. Several persons went a considerable distance on the mountains, but returned without any intelligence of their lost neighbours. The principal inhabitants of the parish assembled in order to consult on this strange occurrence, but no one knew what to advise, until some one said, "Perhaps the dead body was not in a fit state to be removed in the basket; or the fellows belonging to Wald's party are returned, and have seized the men: it would be better, therefore, for several to arm themselves, and go to the cave, and take a coffin with them—thus they would be prepared for either of the two evils."

This proposition was no sooner made than

approved ; and once more a company of about twenty set out for the mountains. They took the same track as before, but saw nothing of the three men. They went to the cave, and finding the body untouched, placed it in the coffin ; but as it was fast decomposing, they thought it better to take notes of its appearance, and then finally to close it up. The deceased was a female, of about twenty ; stripped, apparently, of the most valuable part of her dress ; her head was bruised, her face bloody, and a piece of cord was still tied around her neck.

While one party was nailing the coffin, another went to Waldi's house, and found it empty. Then they went to the cavern where the woman and Galmina were found, but saw no one ; and after spending some time in fruitlessly searching for the Sida men, returned to the cave.

“ We must not go back,” said the kreppstiore, “ until we have searched every place for the poor fellows.”

Then they went into different parts, and

spent several hours in searching without success; at length, dispirited, they set off for Sida.

All were anxiously waiting the arrival of the party; and all were filled with wonder and consternation when it was known that none of the men had been seen. The wives of the poor fellows were distracted — they made the air resound with their lamentations. After a few moments a shriek, which thrilled every one, was heard; and the dying light of the evening was just sufficient to trace out a female form, robed in white, who burst through the crowd, and threw herself on the coffin, which had been lowered from the horse. All eyes were turned in that direction. Who, or what was it? Some thought it was the spirit of the departed come to lament over its ill-fated remains. Almost immediately, Thorna rushed to the spot, and threw herself on her knees by the side of the mysterious visitant. "My dear Galmina!" she cried, "do not — do not distress yourself. Do — do come with me!"

"Oh!" she cried, in a voice of surprise and despair, "this plank — this cruel plank keeps

me ! ” Then, looking into the darkened air, she exclaimed, “ O ! may some invisible hand tear it away, and give me one look more, one more embrace of my dear, my murdered Lara ! ” Then she endeavoured to force back the cover and, with the effort, fell senseless. She was taken up and carried into Gudbrand’s house.

and the bones had not yet been gathered up. The minister had been absent since just before the day of the accident, and had not yet returned. The people were in a state of great perplexity and alarm.

ON THE NEXT DAY CHAP. IX.

ON the next day, the anxiety of the Sida people was increased; for the more they thought of the missing men, the more they were perplexed. A new occurrence, however, in some measure, attracted their attention. Lara Thordalston and Ion Sterinderson were to be buried; and excepting a few who had gone to the east in search of the lost travellers, and others who were in the mountains with the flocks, all the parish was expected to be present. Galmina was become resigned to the will of Heaven, and Thord was more tranquil than he had been. The people assembled in a meadow fronting the clergyman's house, to which place the coffins were brought. Gudbrand and his household, among whom was Galmina, had just joined the multitude, when the minister appeared, and all moved on, in mournful procession, towards the

church-yard, singing a funeral hymn. The tune was slow and solemn.

“ The joy that welcomes man to earth
 Is wreath’d with glistening tears :
 Sorrow attends him at his birth,
 And many fears.

In youthful bloom, disease’s dart
 Pierces his tender breast ;
 The fever visits every part,
 He finds no rest.

Or if he reach to manhood’s prime,
 Some dark insidious foe
 Seizes an unsuspected time,
 And lays him low.

And if perchance, preserv’d from foes,
 He holds his fleeting breath ;
 Yet soon he suffers mortal throes,
 And prays for death.

Give us, O Lord ! thy heavenly grace,
 That we from sin may flee ;
 And when we leave this dwelling place,
 May rest with thee ! ”

Just as the hymn was concluded, they arrived at the residence of the dead. The coffins were now lowered into the grave; a little earth was thrown on them; and the clergyman, in an

affecting manner, with a tremulous voice, consigned the bodies to the dust, to be food for worms, and the souls to the mansions of Heaven, to be happy for ever. There was a dead silence for some minutes among the multitude, unless when, at intervals, a sigh or a subdued sobbing was heard. The clergyman, with a faltering voice, recommenced the singing —

“ Our friends are now consign’d to earth ;
And we——”

No voice joined him, and tears compelled him to stop. There was, again, an impressive pause. Soon, however, the stillness was broken, and a general uproar began ; for some one fierce of aspect, in a dress of white wadmal*, and very bloody, was seen furiously running among the people. He ran to the grave, and seized the wooden spade.

“ O God ! ” exclaimed Galmina, “ that is Thord ! ”

He brandished the spade, and dashed into the thickest of the throng, mowing down men

* Coarse, home-made cloth.

and women. Some of the crowd were flying, some were assisting their friends, some were screaming, some were faint, and some were paralysed and motionless. Thord was here and there with incredible swiftness, and though many attempted to seize him, it was useless. He raved, and was perfectly furious. At length, having broken the spade and exhausted himself, he sat down on a bank, near Lara's grave, in a state of helplessness, the blood flowing copiously from his nostrils. It was only then, that any person dared to approach him; and some one, coming from behind, seized his arms, while others gathered around and secured him. So much precaution, however, was unnecessary, for he was incapable of exertion. Thorna came to him, and Thord looking up, inquired, "What is all this?"

"Do you not know what you have been doing?" said Thorna.

"No."

A considerable change seemed to have passed on the maniac. He was now almost a sane man. But, although he appeared to have a

perfect consciousness of every thing around him, he was ignorant of the past.

"Have I done any harm?" he asked, with an anxious countenance. "Are these people hurrying away on my account? I am sorry; very sorry."

"Let me," said Thorna, "wipe the blood from you. And here," she said, turning to the bystanders, "will any of you carry him to the house?"

"I can walk," said Thord. However, on attempting to do so, he found himself too weak. He was carried home, and nursed with great care; and, from that moment, he had no return of his maniacal malady. During the last violent paroxysm, and the hemorrhage, it is probable that some change took place in the more delicate organs of his body, which enabled the soul to regain the mastery over the senses, and to act in a rational manner.

It afterwards appeared that a domestic, left in the house with Thord, having been anxious to see the funeral, fastened the maniac's door, and went into the garden to look at the crowd

moving towards the church-yard. The prisoner was sufficiently sane to discover that something unusual was transpiring, for he heard the chanting, and pushing aside the shutter of his window, saw the people moving by. He endeavoured to open the door; but being unable to do so, became enraged, burst the fastening, ran furiously out of the house, and springing over the garden-wall, got into the church-yard.

“My dear Galmina,” said good old Gudbrand, when he perceived what a change had come on Thord, “God is merciful; for if he has taken one, he has given you another, who will, I hope, be your companion and solace. And even in respect of his darkest dispensation, remember that, although it is most painful for the survivors it is most joyous for herself.”

Much more did the good old man say; and much support did Galmina receive from the sympathy of her friends; so that, at length, the mists of sorrow passed away, and her prospects brightened with hope.

CHAP. X.

ON the morning after the funeral, Thorna was in the garden before breakfast, tending on her plants, when one of the neighbours asked her if she had heard of old blind Thorsby's dream.

“ What dream ? ” she inquired.

“ If you have not heard it,” replied the neighbour, “ go down, and she will tell you. “ T is a wonderful dream.”

Thorna set off immediately for Thorsby's house, and found the old woman in the *badstofa**, on her bed, surrounded by three or four neighbours.

“ My dear Thorsby ! ” said the maiden, “ what do I hear of your dream ? ”

“ Ah ! is that Thorna Magnusson ? ” she inquired ; “ come near, and I will tell you.”

Thorsby was between seventy and eighty

* A bed-room common to the whole family.

years of age : and although she had been blind during a third part of this period, and was now sinking under the accumulation of years ; her countenance was fresh and cheerful. She was sitting, and resting against a board at the head of the bed. Thorsby was the mother of one of the women who had lost her husband.

“ I have had many dreams,” said the invalid, “ which, without doubt, were sent by a kind Providence for my own good, and the good of my neighbours. Many of these have proved to be true. Indeed, shall I not believe in such communications from Heaven, when I had a warning of my blindness in a dream ? Did you never hear of that, my dear ? ”

“ I have heard something about it,” said Thorna ; “ but I don’t know the particulars.”

“ I dreamt,” said Thorsby, “ that I was on the green near old Wigfus Mordelson’s house, on a dark winter night, when suddenly a light burst around me, which at first flashed like the mountain-flames, and afterwards settled into a calm and gentle lustre. Then a spirit appeared before me, who had glistening wings, a robe like

that of mist when the moon shines on it, and a countenance so fair and pleasing, that, although at first affrighted, I could scarcely keep my eyes from gazing on him. In a few moments his features became darkened, and he stepped towards me, saying, ‘I have something to give you—shall ye receive good at the hands of the Lord, and not evil?’ Then he opened a box, and took something black from it, which he put on my eyes. ‘This,’ said he, ‘is the ointment of darkness.’ I felt a great deal of pain, and when I opened my eyes, found, to my great horror, that I could see nothing. The Spirit led me home; and after this I seemed to live for many years, until, when I was old, he came to me—but I could not see him—and said, ‘Your sorrow shall be turned to joy: this is the ointment of light.’ He put some of it on my eyes, and I beheld what I cannot describe. Any words of mine would be very poor for such enchanting scenes. God grant that I may behold it in reality!’

Thorna’s eyes were rivetted on blind Thorsby, and she fancied that she had scarcely ever seen

such a heavenly expression as was then playing on the speaker's countenance.

"But," continued Thorsby, "let me return to the dream of last night. You will not, my dear, suppose that I have no reason for depending on dreams; for, after I had fancied myself blind, I awoke, and found myself so. God speaks in visions as he did in former times; therefore, do not, as many do—in this time of departure from the simplicity and piety of their ancestors—who drive God from them in their waking hours, and in their hours of sleep. O! my dear Thorna, do not forget your Great Benefactor. This morning I awoke with a troubled mind, for the visions of the night were painful. I thought I saw the men in a deep, rocky valley, amongst grass and bushes, stripped of their clothing, sitting on the ground, and perishing. O! it makes my heart sick to think of them. They groaned and wept; but there was none to help them: their lamentations passed away on the regardless breeze—there was no voice to breathe tidings of deliverance into their ears—no balm to heal their wounds.

Oh! it was a distressing sight. They are now present before me. My dear Sæmund!" she exclaimed; and then remembering, she added, "Alas! my voice cannot reach him."

"My good Thorsby," said the maiden, "this is a communication from Heaven. Do you know where the men are? This dream will, I hope, by the goodness of God, lead to their discovery."

"I am not certain of the place," replied Thorsby, "but I think it is somewhere near Steinavik."

"I will now leave you," said the maiden. "May the blessing of Heaven descend upon you. I will go home, and tell my father of the dream."

"My dear lady," said the disconsolate wife of Sæmund, "do, for God's sake, endeavour to find him. I am afraid he will die of cold and hunger." The poor woman burst into tears; and Thorsby departed.

The benevolent maiden, full of strange tidings, ran home; and seeing several neighbours on the way, beckoned them to follow her.

When she arrived, Gudbrand and the household were at breakfast.

“Where?”—said the old man, looking towards her.

“Father, father,” said Thorna, interrupting him, “I have strange news to tell you. Blind Thorsby has had a dream, in which she has seen the three men tied to the ground, and almost perishing. They are near Steinavik.”

The breakfast proceedings instantly ceased; Gudbrand mechanically arose; Eggert was on his legs in a moment; and all, strangers included, moved out of the room.

“Let us get ourselves ready,” said Gudbrand.

The news quickly spread throughout the parish; and, in an incredibly short time, horses were saddled, dogs were unloosed to accompany the expedition, and a great number of persons set out for Steinavik. They were not long in going and before they had time to say much they had travelled seven or eight miles. Now the adventurers slackened their pace, and began to look around, but could see no one. The country was become precipitous, so that they

were obliged to alight, and then, with the dogs, they searched in different directions. After a short time, Ion Sigfusson's dog barked, and in a minute or two was seen running towards his master.

“There's something in this,” said Ion, and set off to meet the sagacious animal, which immediately began to retrace its steps. All the party followed the dog, and arrived at a dell, like that described by Thorsby, where they beheld the men sitting on the ground, fastened to stumps of trees.*

“There they are!” cried one.

“But they are dead!” said another.

“No, they are not dead,” exclaimed old Gudbrand, who was now come up. “God

* In some parts of Iceland, there are remains of groves, but it is said that not a single grove of full-grown trees exists on the island. Kerguelen says, “M. Horrebou's critique M. Anderson sur ce qu'il dit qu'il n'y a point de bois en Islande; il fait ensuite le détail de deux ou trois forêts, qui, dit-il, ont plus d'une demi-lieue de tour. Pour moi, je n'ai point vu du tout de bois; et l'on m'a dit qu'il y avoit seulement en quelques endroits des broissailles et de petits buissons.”—*Relation d'un Voyage*, 4to. p. 40.

would not have sent us, and have suffered them to die before we came."

Before the party descended, one of the men was observed to move.

"They are living!" cried Gudbrand.
"Thank God! they are living."

On arriving, it was found that none of them could speak, and two were senseless. They were pitiable objects, for they were bloody; and their legs, from continual struggling on the ground, were plastered with mud. There was no time, however, for melancholy reflections—the men were perishing, and prompt assistance alone could save them—all therefore began to cut the thongs which bound them, and soon carried the captives to a small patch of grass on the upland, where the sun shone brightly. Some water was brought in a skin hat, and given to the sufferers, which revived them considerably; but they remained for some time much depressed in spirits. It is frequently supposed that a man preserved from calamity is exhilarated in proportion to the evil avoided, but no opinion is more erroneous: for, whether it

be owing to the disordered state of the nervous system ; or the agitation arising from the remembrance of danger ; or the bodily exhaustion succeeding violent exertion ; such persons are generally gloomy, and desirous of repose. They said little therefore, but lay on the warm grass and fell asleep. After an hour they were awoke, and now, being revived, they began to feel and express gratitude to God and their kind neighbours.

The poor fellows were eager to return ; and the people who came out were anxious to convey the news of the discovery ; hence, they went back as expeditiously as the strength of the sufferers would allow. The entrance into Sida afforded a novel spectacle, for the cavalcade was almost covered with dust ; and on three of the horses, behind the riders, the lost men were placed — disfigured, bloody, and plastered with mud. Although a herald preceded them, crying, “ All safe ! ” the spectators could scarcely credit what he said, or prevent themselves from being shocked. Poor old Thorsby was led to the door, that she might be present when the

multitude passed, and when Sæmund returned. The people greeted her with blessings. It was a happy day for blind Thorsby; indeed it was a happy day for all, and the harbinger of peace and joy to the parish of Sida.

The three men soon recovered from the effects of their cruel treatment; and on the next day, which was Sunday, the clergyman offered up especial thanks to Almighty God for his late goodness, which was responded by many sincere hearts, and preached a sermon for the purpose of persuading men, on all occasions, to put their trust in Him from whom their help cometh.

CHAP. XI.

IT may be proper now to mention the manner in which the three men fell into their difficulties. When they set out from Sida, they were advised to hold communication with no one, but to go to the cave, and return as quickly as possible. It seems, however, that the robbers, who had gone to the north, returned that morning to Waldi's house, and being alarmed at finding it empty—fearing that some of the officers of the law had been there—they determined on retracing their steps. When on the way to the sea-coast, they espied the Sida men; and, being six in number, and well armed, they resolved on finding out, if possible, who the men were, and what had happened to Waldi and his companions. One of the robbers dressed himself in a jacket and trousers, such as are worn by fishermen on the south coast, and, taking a circuitous rout, came up with the

travellers; when, after the usual salutation, he said, "You came from Sida, I suppose. I wish you had been going there, for I am bound in that direction."

One of the men, Skule Ionson, said, "Do you know any one in Sida?"

"I was a servant," replied the robber, "with Sira Gudmerson, the clergyman, when he lived in the parish of Grondheit, about ten years ago."

"Were you?" exclaimed all, eagerly.

"If we had been going to Sida," said Skule Ionson, "we would have helped you on."

"When shall you return?" inquired the fellow.

"In about three hours," said Ionson.

"Are you come moss-gathering?" he inquired. "You have a pretty large basket there, I see."

"Our errand is secret," replied Ionson, "and we were warned not to speak to any one about it; but as you are a sort of friend, and known to Sira Gudmerson, I may tell you what it is, though I scarcely know where to begin, for 'tis

a long story. However, I'll tell you a part now, and the rest when we go back to Sida. A party came out from the parish a moss-gathering; and, unfortunately, one of them, our friend Gudbrand Magnusson's daughter, wandered from the rest, and was seized by Waldi Freyde, the noted robber."

The stranger seemed interested in what he heard, which induced Ionson, with much simplicity, to say, "Waldi is now a prisoner; therefore, thank God! we have no occasion to fear him." Then, continuing his story, he added, "The maiden was rescued, and a large number of men came out to take the robber; but, before they found him, they discovered a dead body in a cave. It is for the purpose of carrying away the body that we are come. Waldi, Oddur, and a woman were seized. Oddur is dead: the other two, I suppose, will be hanged."

The stranger became pale, and exhibited other symptoms of agitation. "O! if I were to tell you all that has happened," continued Ionson, "it would make your hair stand on

end; for these robbers and murderers are the terror of the country. There never used to be any thing of this sort, and I pray God it may not continue long. I am sure that you, as well as me, would be thankful if they were all hanged, that the country might have peace again; for people cannot be easy while they are in fear of being murdered. We shall remove the dead body and put it into the basket; and then, I think, we shall go and look at Waldi's house."

"How far are you from the cave?" inquired the stranger.

"About three miles, I believe."

"You will return then in three or four hours. But, suppose any one should attack you at Waldi's house, would you be able to defend yourselves?"

"No," replied Ionson; "we brought no arms with us, for we only came out to fetch the dead body."

"I can show you that I have some business with Sira Gudmerson," said the robber, taking off his cap, "I have a letter for him. Ah! I don't see it here though. It must have fallen

out on the hills, for I took off my cap there. However, go on; I shall know where to find you. I will go back and look for the letter."

"That's a nice civil fellow," said Ionson to his companions. "I am glad we met with him. He will be good company for us when we go back."

The Sida men had not proceeded far, when they were overtaken and surrounded by six horsemen.

"You are prisoners!" cried one of them, in a hoarse voice. "Go with me!"

Three fellows then seized the Sida horses, and turning them, made them retrace their steps. The prisoners were so much frightened, that they offered no resistance; and the alarm of Ionson was increased by fancying that one of the ruffians was like the friendly stranger who had just parted from him. The leader of the troop ordered the basket to be cast off from the horse (which had followed the other horses), and thrown over the side of the hill. They now went on at a brisk trot; the captives lamenting their fate, and the robbers endeavour-

ing to silence them by oaths or blows. After they had travelled four or five miles towards the eastern coast, the leader said, "It's no use to take these noisy fellows further." Then, turning to the prisoners, he showered upon them a volley of oaths, which we need not repeat, and added, "If we had fallen into the hands of the Sida people, they would have hung us. We will serve you just as bad." Then, raising his gruff voice, "You villains!" he cried, "what have you done with Waldi?"

No one answered. "Now, stop here," said he to his men: "take these fellows from their horses, drag them into the dell, tie them to the trees, and let them be starved to death."

The captives begged piteously for their lives, but in vain; for the first part of the sentence was promptly executed. Indeed, the wretches, who composed the gang, thought it good sport; and accompanied their exertions with many a coarse joke on the Sida men. As a climax to this cruel treatment, the leader, as soon as the poor fellows were secured, seized a knotted stick, and began to beat them (as he said, for

amusement) on the head, face, and breast; nor did he cease, until the cries and groans of the sufferers compelled him: then, taking the Sida horses and the clothing, the robbers set off.

The suffering of the captives was extreme; and just before the party arrived from Sida, two were become senseless. A raven alighted on one, and pecking his face, roused the unfortunate man, who uttered a deep groan, and the bird flew away. Blood flowed copiously from the wound, and the poor fellow again became senseless. Several ravens, afterwards, wheeled about, and flapped their dark wings over them, and seemed impatient for a repast. It was a dreadful reflection for the man, who was still conscious, that, in a short time, he would die, and the birds would feed on him; or perhaps, they would begin their meal before life was extinct. However, as we have seen, help arrived just in time to save them.

CHAP. XII.

THE trial of Waldi and the woman had been postponed for about a week. Before we attend to that event, it will be natural to look at the persons who have recently engaged our attention. The three men, as it has been stated, were recovered. Thord was become reasonable; and, as a proof of it—at least, in the opinion of the better sex, and of all who know what is right—he was in love: the sweetness and sterling goodness of Thorna had fascinated him. The influence of love is, of course, delightful; and happy is he who tastes it without alloy. Such happiness, however, is rare. Indeed, owing to the evils which follow in its train, love is sometimes described as a Juggernaut that mangles and destroys its votaries. But the truth is, suspicion, jealousy, and other baneful influences must be blamed for the evils which beset lovers; while love is no more re-

sponsible for the misery of its votaries, than the moon is for the clouds and tempests that sometimes accompany her as she travels through the heavens. What is there in joyous eyes, or laughter-loving features, to produce misery? But misery may be, and is produced by neglect, contempt, and rivalry. Love then, must receive the honour which belongs to it, and the blame must be cast on what deserves it.

It was unfortunate however for Thord, that he had seen Thorna; and it was doubly unfortunate for her, that she had seen him. Generous minds delight in kind offices; and these excite gratitude and affection, which, in many instances, grow to considerable maturity. When this is perceived, one or perhaps both are anxious to control them; but they find the labour difficult. Perhaps only one is inclined to break the chain, which, at first, was scarcely perceivable, but is now weighty and powerful: in this case, a struggle ensues. Abstractedly considered, both are equal; — that is, one is anxious to sever the connection, and the other to preserve it; — but if the connection arose from mutual regard,

and the disposition to break it arise from a sense of propriety, the combat is not equal; for there are entangling delights on one hand, while on the other there is only a cold notion of consistency and duty. Association, of course, brings similarities to our view — it brings pleasing thoughts on pleasing occasions. Duty, therefore, may read a serious lesson during a tranquil half-hour in solitude; but its voice would scarcely be heard in the company of the beloved one — for there, past, present, and future are decked with enchantments; and whether the memory refer here, or the imagination there, all, all is obscured by mysterious delight. This is the reason why people, on some occasions, decide on certain conduct; but when they are in a different temperament, and association acts differently, they do the very opposite. Let no one suppose that, because he is convinced of the propriety of a thing, and disposed to perform it, he will, under other circumstances, possess the same disposition; for if he think so, he is certainly mistaken; hence, let him avoid the circumstances which would

lead him astray. Thord wished to preserve and strengthen the chain of regard which had been formed between himself and Thorna; the latter wished to destroy it: this occasioned much heart-burning, fear, and jealousy. Thorna, however, throughout the whole affair, acted as well as woman could act, which is, perhaps, the highest kind of praise.

Galmina at this period — which was about ten days after she had visited Sida, was recovered from the effects of her cruel treatment. It has been hinted that her attractive qualities — her lovely person, her amiable disposition, and her gentle manners — had affected the heart even of Eggert. Every man, without doubt, is gifted with a heart — and here, we mean, not the literal heart merely, but the metaphorical or poetical heart — the seat of the finer susceptibilities and passions. There is not one on the face of the earth who is invulnerable to the charms of woman. The only differences among men consist in time and taste — one is affected suddenly, another slowly; one is fascinated by this quality, another by

that. There is not a woman in existence probably, for whom some heart is not adapted — for whom some one, at least, is not capable of being influenced by love: nor is there a man probably, however defective in mind and body, but may excite feelings of regard in the breast of some woman. And if extremes are brought into union — if even loveliness will wed deformity — we need not wonder when we behold persons of different dispositions and different intellectual abilities, joining themselves in the holy bands of matrimony. The wisdom of Providence is perceivable in this arrangement: in the first place, an universal disposition exists for the union of the sexes; and in the second, by the amalgamation of dissimilar qualities — of eccentric dispositions, of high and low mental gifts, of personal beauty and deformity, of corporeal strength and weakness — the result is a comparative uniformity and a perpetuity of vigorous, healthful, and intellectual human beings.

And now, it may be mentioned that the attentions of Eggert — his honest friendly con-

duct — had recommended him to the good opinion of Galmina. Although love arises from a variety of causes, yet it is, perhaps, in every instance, the delightful contemplation of qualities which had been previously approved. At first, they arose as momentary glimpses and indefinable impressions of loveliness; now, some quality is discovered to which a thousand fancied graces attach themselves, as a migratory swarm to the queen-bee. The exciting cause of love may be form, disposition, mind, or manner; or it may be an assemblage of qualities blended in one prominent trait; and this, because it is indefinable, is mysterious, and because it is mysterious it is attributed to supernatural agency — to fate or uncontrollable power; thus the person affected suffers himself to be led captive — tied and bound with the chains of mysterious delight. The more novel a feeling is, the more difficult, of course, it is to be accounted for; and thus novices in love — those in whom the first buddings exist — are the most bewildered, the most delighted, the most firmly convinced of its supernatural power.

Novelty then is one great cause of love, and it was this which affected Galmina and Eggert. They had been brought together under circumstances of a peculiar kind, which had excited kindly and mutual feelings; hence their hearts were warmed and softened, so that, when the danger and excitation were over, it was found that each heart had taken in some respect the impress of the other.

We may please ourselves with the reflection, that good old Gudbrand, his worthy partner, and Vola were well. The last was sometimes looked on by the youths of the parish with an admiring eye; but, strange as it may be, she treated the sex with disdain. There may have been more affectation than sincerity in this; for people are sometimes inclined to avoid external signs when the heart is not a little biassed in some particular direction. Or, perhaps, she derived a feeling of proud superiority from the submissiveness and compliments that were paid to her; and which, she fancied, would be increased by a show of distance and haughtiness.

In the close of our review, however, we have

a dark cloud with drops of sorrow. Poor old Thorsby, of whom we have lately spoken, on this day — the day before the trial — was summoned to her final home. This pleasing and intelligent old woman, as well as excellent Christian, departed from earth to a better world, just before the sun, which she had not seen for twenty years, had sunk below the hills, which Thorsby in her youth delighted to frequent. Great excitation of mind, although of a pleasing kind, had probably hastened her end. She had been unwell for two or three days, during which time many of her neighbours had called on her, and found her tranquil — resigned to the will of Heaven, and depending for salvation on God her Saviour.

“ I have,” she said, “ dwelt in dark shades for many years. It is painful to be shut out from the light of Heaven ; but I have remembered the words of the benevolent Spirit, ‘ Shall ye receive good at the hands of the Lord, and not evil ? ’ I feel grateful even for blindness — I have no doubt it has taught me patience. Chastisement, if humbly received, is the intro-

duction to Divine compassion. Oh ! how often have I, in sorrow, chastened my children; and when they have given heed to good counsel, I have loved them more tenderly. So it is doubtless with our Heavenly Parent — he chastises us in pity, and when we return from our wanderings, he receives us, not with reproaches, but with love. I look forward to the time when the benevolent Spirit shall say, ‘Behold ! your sorrow is turned to joy.’ Then shall I be admitted to the regions of Light.”

When Sira Gudmerson called on the dying woman, she desired the rest of the company to leave the room; and then she told him what visions she had lately had of future times on earth, and of the realms of bliss. “I find,” she said, “that as my bodily strength declines, my soul becomes more vigorous, as if, when about to cast off the mortal covering, it is preparing itself for a distant flight.”

She informed Sira Gudmerson that the book of futurity was full of dark passages in respect of her native land. “I would,” she added, “if it pleased God, willingly stay and share the

calamities of my friends ; but the Governor of heaven and earth doth what is right. Improve the time of peace and security — improve it, my dear friend ! because it is short."

The predictions relating to earth were not to be divulged by the minister. They were conveyed by Heavenly tongues to the departing spirit of Thorsby, which tarried for a moment on the threshold of eternity, in order to convey them to the pious pastor ; then, having completed the communication, and described some beatific scenes, it fled to the mansions of repose.

During the conversation, Thorsby said that the plains of Heaven were now opened before her. The scene at that moment in the chamber of death was peculiarly solemn. The clergyman was standing near the bed, while Thorsby was lying on it, with her hands uplifted, and her eyes fixed on Heaven. A pleasing expression played on her countenance : the shadows of the room seemed to be replaced by a light haziness, and in the obscurity, Sira Gudmerson fancied he saw angelic forms dimly revealed,

while his ears were charmed with seraphic music. "It may," observed the clergyman afterwards, "have been the effect of an excited imagination; but if so, the delusion was very complete." His reverie was broken by the voice of Thorsby, which began to describe the scenes of Paradise. The clergyman remained silent and motionless: in fact, he was in such a state of excitement that he almost feared to breathe. After discoursing for some time in a strain of unearthly eloquence, she suddenly ceased, her hands fell, her head sunk a little, her features sobered into the expression of tranquillity; she gently moved—it was her last movement!

CHAP. XIII.

THE morning of the trial was an important one at Sida. The trial of a man and woman for murder! such an event had never been known before. Every one intended to go — men, women, and children — for the purpose of witnessing some of the proceedings. Shortly after breakfast, a man paraded the township beating a drum, which was the usual mode of summoning courts. On hearing the sound, Gudbrand and his family got themselves ready. Galmina had looked forward to this morning with much trepidation, but she was calmer than she had expected. Indeed, it frequently happens that our composure during an occurrence is proportionate with our previous anxiety: for if we fear much and realise little, we become exhilarated: if we fear little and realise much, we become disheartened: thus the timid in anticipation is frequently courageous in act, and the confident

boaster becomes a despicable coward. It was feared, that a detailed account of the appalling scenes which Thord had witnessed would again disorder his mind: however, a merciful Providence prevented this result. People of all ages were now gathered around the house of the hreppstiorè, in two rooms of which, separated from the rest of the building, Waldi and the woman were lodged. Before the prison was opened, there was a general clamour, which, as soon as the murderer appeared, was succeeded by inquisitive silence, for every one was anxious to look on the man of whom he had heard so much. Even the children were hushed into breathless awe as soon as Waldi was seen. In the course of a few minutes, the woman was brought out. She looked on the throng with indifference, returned the smile of her hardened companion, and then followed him to the court

The building appropriated for the trial was not spacious; and the hall of justice, which was entered by a flight of irregular steps, was far from handsome. The windows were dim, being composed of *hinne* (prepared animal-

membranes) instead of glass; and although there was something like a ceiling to the room, it was much dilapidated. A large table, covered with drab cloth, on which were piles of books, was placed in the centre of the apartment; and at the head of it, sat the Prefect*, dressed in a red coat, trimmed with gold lace, and near him the Sysselman and several officers of inferior rank, among whom was one appointed to prefer, in the name of the king of Denmark, the accusation of robbery and murder against the prisoners; and another to plead their cause. Gudbrand, with his family and visitors, was seated on the right hand, at a little distance from the judge; and all who had been engaged in the recent transactions — who had discovered the dead body, and apprehended the prisoners — were present. The court was crowded to excess. All eyes were rivetted on the novel proceedings, and all hearts were interested in them. The prisoners were placed at the side of the table,

* Or sheriff, who presided in all important criminal cases. There has been some alteration in the executive part of the government since that period.

on the left hand of the prefect. The drum was beaten, the hreppstioré read the king's proclamation, and the usual oaths were administered.

The Counsel — as he may be termed, who preferred the accusation — stated that Waldi was guilty of robbery and murder; that the woman had assisted in the former, and had been privy to the latter. After noticing some of the particulars, he requested the first witness, Galmina Thordalston, to inform the prefect what she knew of the matter. The maiden, trembling, rose from her seat, and stepped towards the table; but being feeble from agitation, Gudbrand kindly assisted her to stand. Then addressing herself to the prefect, she said, “It is an unusual and painful engagement to come forward, thus publicly, in such a cause: indeed, if it were not that the voice of justice, and the loss of a dear sister demand it, and I am confident the man and woman before me are wicked and cruel, I would remain silent. It is, however,” she continued, and apparently gaining a stimulus from the thought, “a duty which I owe to God and man to state what I

know, lest the wicked go unpunished and the helpless suffer.

“About fourteen days since, in the evening, my brother, sister, and myself were travelling on horseback near one of the branches of the Skeiðera, about three miles from Skaftafell, when we perceived four horsemen coming towards us. At first, we took little notice of them; but, all at once, (I suppose from their ferocious appearance) we fancied they were robbers — for we had heard that some had lately infested that part of the country. Thord looked anxiously towards us, and said, ‘Stop! I fear these men are bent on no good.’ As they approached, I became much alarmed, and plunged my horse into the stream. The water was deep, and the current strong; but I kept the saddle, and after much plunging the horse regained the land. When I returned, I found Thord surrounded by the men, who were holding the bridle of his horse. He was remonstrating with them, but it was useless. He then offered them all the money he had, when Waldi — the man now before me — turned on him with a sneer and

exclaimed, ‘By St. Austin ! very generous, to give us what is ours already !’ And then, with an oath, said to his companions, ‘Go on : don’t waste your time. Lead the fellow away, and let some one take charge of the maidens.’

“Lara had set off when the men came up, but she had galloped along the bank of the river, and after some time, finding herself alone, returned. A man now took the bridle of my horse, and Waldi himself forced on Lara. We found, alas ! that our intreaties and protestations were useless, unless to excite the brutal jests of the men. We were conducted across two or three branches of the Skeidera, and then over a plain, the name of which I forget, but there were three mountains visible towards the west of it, at about equal distances from each other.”

“I know the place well,” observed the prefect ; “and I have reason to know it, for I nearly lost my life there about the time you mention. But, please to proceed.”

“As we were travelling on the plain,” continued Galmina, “and it was now dusk, my guide suddenly checked his horse, and uttered

a cry of terror. At the same moment we looked towards the mountains, and beheld huge masses crumbling from the summit of the central pile; and, immediately, a vast cloud was raised which hid the mountains from our view, except that, here and there, we could discern the snowy pinnacles contrasted with the dark blue heavens. After a pause of a few seconds we heard the crash, which was tremendous. It seemed as if the heavens and earth were rent asunder. Every one was panicstruck: even the horses were bereft of power — they stood trembling. When it was found that the danger was over, the courage of the men revived, and with it their wicked purposes. They pursued their journey, forcing us along with them."

"This," observed the prefect, "was certainly audacious conduct; for when the judgments of God were in the earth — when the mountains were rent asunder — these men might surely, if at no other time, have abandoned their wicked practices. I have reason to remember that awful evening; and I refer to it, more particularly, although it is not connected with our present

business, for the purpose of stating that I was on the very plain, and near the very mountain, when the *skrida* occurred. I thank God for my preservation! I was so near the scene of convulsion, that I have on my face a mark which was occasioned by the occurrence. A stone struck the tent, in which myself and several others were, and broke a pole, which in falling grazed my face. We extricated ourselves as we best could — although half buried in earth — and ran off in different directions. It was a considerable time before we met; but I wish we had, in our wanderings, found this lady and her relatives.*

“That was not the last warning,” continued Galmina, “which these men received; for, as we were threading our way among rocks and chasms (and it was now dark), the horse of one of the men tripped, and fell with the rider into a gulley. There seemed, however, to be a

* In England it would be deemed inconsistent with the dignity of the court, for the presiding officer to interpose any remarks relating to himself: but in Iceland, they are not very particular in these matters.

merciful Providence even here; for the man, as the horse was falling, was flung on a bank just below the edge of a precipice, while the horse rolled to the bottom, as we supposed, for nothing more could be seen of it. The man was so little injured, that he got up and rode behind Thord.

“ After a tedious and miserable journey, we arrived at Waldi’s house; but not by the same route, I believe, as we afterwards took in coming from it, for it seemed less hilly.

“ Lara and myself were put into a room, which we found comfortless enough. That woman (she continued, looking at the prisoner,) was there. She pointed to some straw in one corner of the place, and said, very gruffly, ‘ That’s your bed.’ We were so much dispirited, and so unhappy, that we said nothing. The woman brought us some cold coffee, which appeared to have been made for a week, and some rye-bread, but we tasted neither. At last, almost mechanically, we sat on the straw. My heart was full almost to bursting; and, thank Heaven! it was relieved by a flood of tears.

Lara wept also. We fell on each others necks and gave vent to our feelings. In the mean while, the woman again came in, bringing some straw with her, which she threw into a corner of the room; and after heartily cursing us for our childishness, as she termed it, and commanding us to be silent, lay on it, and covering herself with a rug, fell asleep. We continued awake for a long time: indeed it was not until morning that we became drowsy; and then she compelled us to rise, that she might strip us of the most valuable part of our apparel. At first, we endeavoured to reason with her, and excite her pity, but found she was incapable of feeling. Lara again sat on the straw, and I was standing by, when the woman seized my arm, and endeavoured to unfasten the collar of my treja*, but finding it difficult she pulled it violently in order to break the fastening. I was provoked at her conduct, and pushed her from me, when she tripped over Lara's feet, and fell on the

* A kind of jacket, generally of fine cloth, and ornamented with much work, sometimes with silver buttons.

ground. She arose in a great fury, and tearing off my treja, seized my hair, and held me, until Lara sprang up, and compelled her to let go. Then the woman called one of the men, who came and staid while she plundered us of our trinkets, and the principal part of our clothing."

"Was that the man?" inquired the prefect, pointing to the prisoner.

"No," she replied: "I have not seen him since."

"On that day, we were permitted, after much intreaty, to see Thord; and soon after, Oddur came and took away Lara. Our meeting had been painful; but our separation — Lara's removal from me — was more than I could bear. And when I reflect that it was the last separation — the last word — the last look — O! it is indeed, almost —" Here the maiden burst into tears. After her distress was abated, she resumed the account of her captivity. "Thord was much affected at Lara's departure, and said, 'I fear, very much, the poor girl will come to harm. Of what use was it to take her away, except to increase our distress? They

are such an unprincipled set, that I am afraid what they will do. Oh, I wish I were free ! If these cords could be removed, I should be able to do something for our liberation. My dear girl ! endeavour to untie some of them.' It seemed then as if the light of Heaven had dispelled our gloom — I was animated, for a moment, with the hope of freedom. But, almost immediately, Oddur, who appeared to have been watching us, entered the place, and pushing me aside, gave my brother a violent blow, which felled him ; and then, stood by, grinning with delight at his ineffectual attempts to rise and revenge the cowardly attack. I now sprang forward to assist Thord ; Oddur also seized him ; and in the scuffle my brother regained his feet ; but, being excited to a state of frenzy, seized the arm of Oddur with his teeth. It was the back part of the arm, and this was held so fast, and the pain was so acute, that the robber could do nothing to extricate himself ; but, flinging the other arm about, and dancing with agony, roared so loud as to bring three or four of his companions to his assistance. Poor

Thord was compelled to let go, and dragged away from me.

“ Not long after, I was led by that woman to the cave at Loke’s Well, and afterwards brought back to the cavern. My apartment was a cold, damp cleft, into which a little dirty straw was thrown. I was very anxious about Lara and Thord ; and in that dreary place, I was sometimes terrified by imaginations, which represented them as faintly appearing in the depths of darkness, in the agonies of death ; and sometimes, I thought I heard their voices above or behind me, saying, ‘ All is over ! all is over !’ However, I will not occupy your time with matters which would be tedious to you, and painful to myself. I will merely add that the period of confinement in that prison, seemed very long ; but it could not have been, in reality, more than three or four days. I scarcely ate any thing ; indeed, little was offered to me ; and I wondered what kind of being I was to continue so long without food. It was an awful place. I shudder when I think of it — darkness, dampness, horrid silence, and ex-

clusion from the world, were my miserable lot; and besides this, the continual fear of being murdered.

“ After the woman had been absent for a considerable time, she returned, and groping her way to me, said many things to vex and irritate me; but I affected to be indifferent at her conduct, on which she struck me with a knife, and cut my hand. This is the mark.” Galmina showed the wound, which was far from healed.

“ I said to her, in a raised and emphatic tone, ‘ Don’t murder me! For God’s sake, don’t murder one of your own sex, who has never injured you.’ There was a distinct echo in the cavern; and after I had concluded, the words ‘ never injured you’ rung through the black, awful place. The woman, I believe, was a little terrified, and crept away to the place where she was found by the Sida people.

“ Not long after, the sound of voices, and the glimmering of a torch startled me. In the course of a few moments, the voices became louder, and the light stronger: then I feared

that Waldi and his men, having murdered my poor brother and sister, were come to murder me. I felt no fear of death — that is in regard to the pain of it — but I did not like the thought of undergoing the awful ordeal at the hands of ruffians. When I discovered who the visitors were, I felt grateful to a kind Providence, and stepping forth, hailed my deliverers.

“I cannot conclude without thanking the benevolent people of Sida for interesting themselves in my behalf, and in that of my brother, and for their kindness since: but above all, I gave thanks,” said she, clasping her hands and lifting her eyes, “to the good Being who has influenced their hearts to charitable deeds; and who has been, from my earliest days, my Protector and Guide: and, although he has taken one — one that I loved much — yet he has taken her to a better place. He has preserved my brother: and he will, I humbly pray, be our Father and our Friend.”

Good old Gudbrand then led the maiden, almost exhausted, to her seat. The prisoners

at first, had seemed perfectly hardened, but they were somewhat abashed at Galmina's evidence, especially when they perceived the effect which it produced on the audience. The latter, unused to such details, were incapable of controlling their feelings; and began to utter execrations on the prisoners. The prefect, however, checked them, and the court was hushed into tranquillity, when Thord appeared at the table:—

“Just as I was dragged from my sister,” said he, “I was forced into a cell, where a chain was put around one of my legs, and the other end of the chain was fastened to the ground. Here, after beating me very much, and knocking me down, the men left me, and there I lay, bewailing my fate. Waldi came to the shutter, which was fixed as a door to the cave, and told me, very roughly, that if I did not make less noise, I should be quieted to some purpose. I continued, however, to cry aloud; sometimes my lamentations were on account of my sisters, and sometimes myself, until, with the exertion and dampness of the place, I

became hoarse and incapable of speaking. I thought I heard Lara's voice, and found that it proceeded through the wall in the back part of the cell. I could not speak; but I contrived to liberate one of my hands, and to make a small orifice in the clay partition with a stone, when I was shocked at perceiving Lara in a cell as miserable as my own — except that it had a little light — sitting on the ground, with a countenance indicating despondency, and her head resting on her hand. She was so much engaged with gloomy thoughts, that she did not seem to have noticed my engagement. I made a noise which roused her, and she started up, but seeing no one, reclined her head as before. I then made a sound, somewhat between a scream and the natural tone of the voice, when she arose, and came towards the wall, and said, 'Who is that?' With some difficulty I contrived to let her know that it was her brother.

"'What is the matter,' she said anxiously, 'that you cannot speak?'

"I could not explain the cause. It was a

painful moment for me. My dear sister was, perhaps for the last time in my presence, and I was unable to converse with her. The more I endeavoured to do so, the more incapable I became of uttering a word. I saw, when once or twice I caught a glimpse of her eye, that her affectionate soul was distressed; but she said several things to comfort me; and then, she whispered, 'I hear some one coming, my dear Thord, farewell.'

"I stepped back, not knowing whether the person would enter my cell or her's; but in a minute I perceived it was the next which had received the visit. I looked in, and saw Waldi and Oddur in it: but, just as they entered, something fell, and the small orifice was closed. I was almost maddened at this accident. I could not hear what was said, but I knew that rough language was passing, and I could distinguish, in a firm tone, the voice of Lara. I heard struggling, and I was almost frantic, when something moved, and I was again capable of looking into the cell. Then I saw Waldi

seize Lara and throw her with much force into the middle of the place.

“ ‘ If you mean to murder me,’ said she, “ Do so ; but, remember — ”

Waldi seized a block of wood, and, with an oath, struck a violent blow on her head. I could not speak : I could make no noise : I could give no assistance : I could not prevent the dreadful act — My poor sister was about to be murdered, and I could do nothing to save her ! I scratched the wall with my nails, until they were torn from my fingers. I jumped ; I stamped ; but the sounds on that soft place could not be heard. I shall never forget the look of my dear, angelic sister, when she perceived the purpose of the murderers. Oh ! who could have thought that there were men in existence, who would murder a helpless maiden ! But I cannot — I scarcely dare to look at the horrid scene.”

Thord was so much affected that the prefect said he had better sit down for a minute or two, until his agitation was subsided. When

he was recovered, he said, "This is a painful subject, but I will endeavour to proceed with it. As soon as Waldi had given the blow, my sister fell. He then flung aside the block of wood, when the brutal Oddur seized it, and struck another blow at her head; after which he took a piece of cord, and tied it around her neck. Waldi and he pulled it." After a pause, he continued, "As my sister's face became convulsed, and her eyes started from their sockets, I felt a sudden rush, as if every particle of blood had been driven to my head. I became bewildered—I remember no more of the horrid affair—indeed, the whole that I have related appears to me like a frightful dream."

The court listened with much interest while Galmina and her brother delivered their evidence—an abstract only of which is now presented to the reader. Afterwards, the hreppstjorē, Eggert, and others, who went to Waldi's house, were examined: and then the officer engaged in defence of the prisoners asked a few questions of the witnesses. The case how-

ever was so plain, that two opinions could not exist respecting it; the prefect, therefore, immediately consulted some of the official persons, and gave judgment:—

“ Waldi Freyde,” said he, in an impressive manner, “ you are found guilty of the crime of murder, in violation of the laws of God and man: the sentence of the court is, that you be hanged; and I pray you to prepare for this awful event. And you, Geirida Rafen,” said he to the woman, “ are found guilty of aiding and countenancing dishonest and murderous deeds. The sentence of the court is, that you be imprisoned for life, and sent into Denmark, to be disposed of agreeably with the will of the King’s majesty.”

The assembly then broke up. Waldi and the woman were conducted to prison. The wicked spirit of the former seemed to be bowed, but not broken: the woman appeared to be almost indifferent. The multitude, however, went home deeply affected with the occurrences of this novel and melancholy day.

CHAP. XIV.

GUDBRAND and his family were comparatively calm on their return from the court. There was no feeling of exultation at the result of the trial, no gratification arising from the indulgence of revenge, but, instead of this, the painful reflection that a fellow creature, probably in an unprepared state, was about to be hurried before the tribunal of his Maker. Besides, the excitation of the morning would naturally be succeeded by depression; hence, little was spoken in Gudbrand's house on that evening; and the family, taking a late dinner, or rather an early supper, soon retired to rest. The next morning, which was a pleasant one, brought better spirits; and when the family were assembled at breakfast, they were somewhat cheerful. Sleep is truly an invaluable friend; for it not only removes corporeal ills—fatigue and even sickness — but diffuses through

the frame vigour and animation. It not only soothes the wounded soul—torn by neglect or bereavement—but imparts healthy and natural joy, so that the person rises from sleep, in some respects, as the soul at the Resurrection will rise from the tomb, leaving its ills behind it.

While the family were at breakfast, Gunlöd said, “I fancied several times yesterday, that Waldi Freyde was much like Arnas Balderson.”

“What Balderson?” inquired Gudbrand: “he that lived in Sida, about thirty years ago?”

“Yes,” replied Gunlöd. “Waldi must now be about fifty years of age. Arnas, when he left, was about twenty. He was a clever boy, but too fond of company; or, perhaps, I should say of wicked company; for this ruined him. I knew his poor mother. She did not hear from him after he left her; but she was told that he was a seaman on board a pirate-vessel, and she broke her heart.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Gudbrand, “how calamitous is vice. It cripples the energies of a youth, if he be subject to it; prevents him

from living happily — which is one great end of life — and casts a gloom on all around him — making the lonely hours of his friends, hours of pale anxiety ; and, at last — for this is the usual termination of the history — the son beggars himself, and dies an outcast : the parents, bowed down with anguish of heart, lose all relish of life, and sink into an early grave. O ! I pray God to prepare and take my children rather than suffer them to wander in the paths of sin and misery.”

The tears trickled down Gunlöd’s face as she responded to this petition.

“ My dear father,” said Vola, “ I do n’t think you have any reason to complain of your children : they are, I think, on the whole, pretty good ; or, at least, I can answer for myself.”

“ My dear,” he replied, “ I did not mean to complain of you — though, I believe, we might all be better ; but I meant to say that it would be less painful for a parent to follow the remains of a beloved child to the grave ” — (Here, the worthy old man, by means of biting

his lip and rubbing his mouth, contrived to retain, what was nearly lost, the mastery over his feelings) — “It would be less painful, I say, than to behold his child wandering in the paths of sin, without hope of recovery.”

“Well, father, I suppose that’s true enough, though I know little of these things ; and I dare say there is room for improvement in me as well as the rest ; but you must confess, father, that I seldom go astray.”

Thorna looked at her sister, and smiled.

“Really,” said Vola, “I do n’t go astray more than others ; and it is as well to be out of the world as out of the customs of it. Now we all know that our dear mother is most exemplary in her conduct, but was not Arnas, the scapegrace, attentive to her in her early days ?”

“My dear,” said Gunlög, colouring a little ; “How do you know any thing of that matter ?”

“My dear mother,” replied Vola, “it seems, from every symptom, to be a true matter.”

“Why, to be sure,” she said, rather hesitatingly, “he was attentive to me in my early

days ; but when he became dissipated, I declined his attentions."

" My dear mother ! " exclaimed Vola, " you were moralising, a short time since, on love and prudence. Now, by mere chance, I discover that you were so loving and prudent as to receive the addresses of a wild fellow who, I have no doubt, will turn out to be Waldi Freyde. But, perhaps he jilted you, and then his jilting was a convincing proof of his dissipation, and you would have nothing more to do with him. That is, my dear mother, you left him — turned away from him — without moving ; and, although you did not move, and were close to him at first, you were, at last, far distant from him. Now if I do n't do worse than take up with such a companion, do not complain. I am censured sometimes by you and Thorna for being flighty — because, perhaps, I can fly a little higher, and look a little further round than my relatives ; but now I find that one of my accusers was about to be married to a robber, and the other was found in the company of two ! My dear Thorna, I suppose it

was not so; but a suspicion, a very slight one, without any foundation, rises in my mind, Did you not, the other night, purposely get into the good society, with whom you were found by Eggert and Gudmandr? and, if so —”

“ If you speak, girl,” said Gudbrand, “ speak properly. Do not —”

“ My dear father, do not moralise. Somehow, I have a great dislike to moralisers. However, I will speak as I ought, though I am sure I have never said half as much against Thorna as she has against me.”

“ For a good reason, probably,” said Gudbrand. “ But Thorna has, I think, passed over defects in your conduct as too small for reprobation, which were greater than what you have seen in her.”

“ Thank you for the compliment, father. Now you perceive that I am better than Thorna; for I receive censures, and am grateful; while she receives compliments, and says nothing.”

“ You,” replied the sister, “ find yourself so

much at home, when you are contending with your friends, that you get on successfully — for whatever is familiar to us is easy; but I am so little accustomed to receive, or contend for compliments, that when I get one I scarcely know what to do with it."

"We must allow, my dear," said Vola, "that compliments in your case are very inappropriate."

"But ——" said Thorna.

"Not a word more, my dear. You say I am at home; and you, of course, as a matter of distinction, must be absent. In your wanderings, have you seen or heard any thing of Marfrede lately? Or have you forgotten him?"

"I wish you had said nothing on this subject," replied Thorna. But, as to forgetting him, I hope I have not — Would you have done so?"

"Would I?" exclaimed Vola. "Do not ask such a silly question. Come home — cease your wanderings — be sensible. For my part, I would not bind, or promise myself to the best

specimen of male creature that ever walked the earth. Forget? yes, I hope, if I had done such a foolish thing as you. It is degrading for a young girl to pledge herself to one of the other sex—to vow that she will be his, whatever may happen. To think of him only, to wait for him only, to look on him only, to talk of him only, to walk with him only, and to die for him only! Can any thing be more ridiculous? Why, by trammeling herself thus, she loses a hundred fairer offers. All the men in the parish, or the district, or the island, might crowd around me, and beg, pray, flatter, or deceive, before I would say to one of them—I will bind myself to thee, for ever!"

"Your notions and mine," said Thorna, "are very dissimilar."

"May they ever be so, my dear! But now, your own true love is in distant lands, and for what I know, will never be nearer: while there is an ocean between you to wash out a vow, rid yourself from the trammels, and be, like myself, free as the careering winds or the dashing and sparkling billows."

.. " Such wild freedom does not suit my taste ; nor does it, I think, suit any one's advantage."

" I think so, my dear," said Gunlöd. " But, in regard to Marfrede, I hope Thorna has made no vows to him : indeed, if I had thought she had, I would not have said what I did the other day ; for I think that vows between lovers, if at all reasonable, are sacred."

" For this reason," said Thorna, with some feeling, " do not, my dear mother, say a word more about Marfrede. If you do not wish me to violate an engagement, do not ask me to reject him."

Eggert and Galmina, who were present, during this desultory conversation, were sometimes listening, and sometimes chatting : but Thord, especially when the conversation turned on Marfrede, was all eye and ear, although he was anxious to prevent any visible indications of feeling. He loved Thorna ardently ; and — as it happens with a sanguine mind, wishes and hopes become treasured in the memory as evidences of success — in proportion as his

wishes grew his expectations grew also. Indeed, so strong was his passion, that he determined to adopt every means, lawful or otherwise, to obtain her: which determination, subsequently acted on, produced many unhappy results.

CHAP. XV.

SIDA was in a state of great bustle and excitation on the day after the trial. As soon as breakfast was over, good old Gudbrand walked out to see and hear what was doing; and amongst other matters, saw some persons engaged in carrying timber, and others in erecting a scaffold for the execution of Waldi.

“I wonder if this be the Arnas Balderson that Gunlög spoke of?” said Gudbrand, as he walked along: but when he came among the workmen, his attention was drawn to other matters. It was intended to erect a pretty large platform, and on it to raise a post or column, to which a strong cross-piece was to be fixed; a little within one end of which a hole was to be bored, and through this a rope passed. As soon as one end of the rope was tied around Waldi’s neck, the other would be pulled by two or three men; and when the body was

raised to a sufficient height, the rope would be fastened to a ring screwed in the platform.

All were full of engagement — some with hands, some with tongues, and some with both. While Gudbrand was looking on, Farmer Eiskeglam came up, and having expressed his astonishment in regard to the past, began to express his fears for the future.

“ This is a strange and alarming matter,” said he, “ the first murder that we have known hereabout; the first murderer, and the first execution. Now it is right that there should be life for life, blood for blood, as Sira Gudmerson says; but I do n’t know exactly, I fear we shall be sorry if we hang the man.”

“ How so?” inquired Gudbrand.

“ Why, I mean as to his spirit. My wife says that I shall never go from home of an evening; or if I do, she declares she will go with me”

“ And do you complain of that?” inquired Hans Troilson, one of the workmen, who was passing near the speaker. “ Heaven be praised for any means which would bring out the

natural, kind, and loving qualities of a wife. She is your companion, Farmer Eiskeglam, she is right in keeping your company."

"Yes, yes—no, no," resumed the farmer.—"She is afraid of ghosts, and would rather have bodily company than ghostly; or she would like for me to see them as well as herself."

"Very good," exclaimed Hans Troilson. "The pleasure is twice as great when there is company to talk of it. Or perhaps there is twice as much seen, where there are two pair of eyes engaged in seeing. Or, as one sight is divided between two persons, perhaps each one sees only half. I do n't know how it is, but I dare say you will settle it cleverly;" and so, adjusting the piece of timber to the convenience of his shoulder, he trotted off.

"What I mean," said Farmer Eiskeglam, "is that my wife is afraid of ghosts, and afraid to be left alone. I am not much afraid of them; but the reason is, I suppose, there hav' n't been any in the parish. However, I believe that when a man goes out of life by

unnatural means — that is, when his proper time is not arrived — his spirit has no place appointed for it; and if so, it must wander about. Now a wandering spirit can put on any shape — that of a bird, a beast, or human creature — and it can frighten men, or lure them to evil. You may depend on it," he said, with emphasis, striking his stick on the ground, " Waldi will have no good blood for the Sida people, and without doubt he will bring some of us to harm."

" Hush! hush! man," said Iorundr Magbert, who came up behind the speaker. " A spirit have no good *blood* for the people? Why a spirit has no blood, good or bad."

" Ey! now, that is well enough for Iorundr, but I can tell you," said Farmer Eiskeglam, " that in Hofda, a small place on the north coast, two men killed a bear, and quarrelled which should have the skin; and one of them, in a fit of anger, struck the other; he, in return, made a thrust at his opponent with a spear, and stabbed him to the heart. The wounded man fell dead; and the other was

horribly frightened — he ran to his house, like a man bereft of reason ; threw his arms around his wife, whom he tenderly loved ; cooled his burning brow for a moment on her heaving bosom ; kissed her wildly ; then returned and kissed her again ; embraced his children ; and, in a state of phrenzy, deaf to the cries and lamentations of his household, ran swiftly to the sea. Meeting with a neighbour, he exclaimed, ‘O ! Egil, I am a ruined man ! — I am ruined ! — I have killed Cormak Grutter. Wo ! wo is me !’ and running onward, he sprang over a cliff into the midst of the waves, and perished.

“ Now both these men were hurried out of the world before their proper time. My notion is that there was no place appointed for them, and the story will prove it, for their spirits wandered about ; — sometimes, they were seen on mountains of ice, engaged in combat ; and sometimes, falling headlong from the glistening, icy pinnacles. One of them, the man who killed the other, was frequently discovered, hanging in the air, at a little distance from the

cliff, and not far above the surface of the sea. In dark, stormy winter-nights, both were sometimes seen riding on clouds, and their piteous cries were heard, as Ion Veigson said, 'cresting the blustering winds' — These were his very words.

"One of the fishermen of Hofda lost his way one evening, and was imprisoned and almost buried in snow for several hours, in a little cove near the cliff. As the waves rolled in, he saw something white on their surface, which was frequently thrown on the beach and rolled back again to the sea. After looking through the darkness for a considerable time, he discovered that it was a man. It was a horrid sight for him — a poor fellow expecting to perish, and to be buried and bleached in the snow. After some time, the body was rolled up the beach, beyond the highest wave, and turned over and over until it reached the middle of the valley; when it ascended into the air, and seated itself on a black cloud — the cloud and the body forming a singular contrast — and passed directly over his head.

At this moment, the figure waved its hand, and cried 'Fifteen years more! fifteen years more!' — meaning that the man would have lived, if he had not been murdered, fifteen years longer; and that it would be so long before he would be sent among spirits. As the spectre passed away, mutterings of revenge were heard. Now, let us examine what followed. The wife of the man who had committed the murder, was struck, in open day-light, by an unseen hand; she became sick and died. Two children out of the three died; and several relations of the man and his wife passed away.

"Will this," he continued, turning to Iorundr, "convince you that it is no trifling matter to hurry a man's soul out of his body before there 's a place appointed for it?"

"I made a joke of it, at first," said Iorundr: "but really, I think it no joke."

The hreppstiorè then came up. "I have been endeavouring," said he, "to engage some persons to do the work to-morrow; but I can get no one."

“What work?” inquired Gudbrand; “the execution of Waldi?”

“Yes.”

“It would be better”—said Farmer Eiskeglam,—

“My dear neighbour,” interposed Gudbrand; “the man is sentenced to die; and nothing that we can say would prevent it. If the hreppstiorè cannot procure men, he must do it himself.”

“No,” replied the officer; “I am not obliged to do it, nor would I; but I must endeavour to get some one who will. Now, who of you lads and active fellows,” said he, to the crowd of labourers, “will undertake the work of helping the murderer out of existence? Any man who will, shall receive two rix-dollars.”

The hammering ceased for a moment, but no one made a reply. The men had not heard the story or the conversation between Gudbrand and his company: and yet no one would accept the offer. “Not I, not I,” were the sounds that proceeded from all parts to the ears of the law officer.

“ Then,” said the hreppstiore, “ I must go further and try what I can do.”

The officer spent the whole of that day in endeavouring to procure persons to undertake the execution of Waldi; but the people of Sida were so little accustomed to such matters, that the thought of taking away the life even of a murderer, in cold blood, was abhorrent to their feelings.

On the following morning, the men were still working about the scaffold, when some one came, and requested them to desist; “ for it is likely,” said he, “ that Waldi will be sent to Denmark. The Prefect,” he added, “ is now in the Court-house consulting with some of the inhabitants on the subject.”

CHAP. XVI.

“THE Court,” observed the Prefect—who was sitting at the table in the Court-house with the Sysselman, and some of the principal inhabitants—“has condemned Waldi to death. This sentence cannot, and indeed ought not to be revoked. There have been, however, objections raised in other parts of the island to the execution of criminals; and I have been instructed, in case a prisoner be sentenced to death, and no one will execute the sentence, that the prisoner must be sent to Denmark, where he will be treated according to ——”

“Ho! Holloo!” cried a man, rushing into the court, “Waldi has hanged himself!”

The assembly were startled, as if electrified, but were incapable of rising from their seats for a moment or two, and then, regaining the use of their limbs, they set off, without speaking a word, and ran after the man who

was returning at full speed to Waldi's prison. It would have been, under other circumstances, a somewhat ludicrous scene ; for all started from the court-door about the same time, and moved on rather quickly in one compact body ; but some were young and others aged, some were agile and others fat and heavy ; so that, in a short time, like a glutinous substance, they were considerably elongated ; and while some were driving on as if heaven and earth were to be gained ; the hinder ones were lagging back as if they had gained, and were obliged to carry both.

Farmer Eiskeglam was a heavy man, and strong in muscle, though "tender on the wind." He was driving on at a brisk trot, puffing and fuming, and by starts soliliquising on the hanged robber, his eyes being "downward cast" for the more facile picking out of bits of convenient road, when Grunby Touch-dotter, a neighbour living on the way side, hearing the noise, ran out, and while engaged in looking breathlessly at the foremost racers,

her hands fixed on her hips, and her person stretched and elevated almost on tip-toes, Farmer Eiskeglam came on, and ran foul of her with such a shock, that the poor woman was knocked flat on the ground; and the farmer, deviating a little from the line of progression—agreeably with the law of dynamics, which regulates the course, in such cases, by the angle of incidence—came down, with great force, at full length on the earth, his corporeal part forming with that of Gruntby (for their feet were almost touching) an angle of about fifty degrees. The leeward racers now bore up to the unfortunate castaways, and helped them both, much bruised, into Gruntby's dwelling.

The prefect, by virtue of his office and lightness of foot, arrived pretty early at the prison-door, where a great multitude was gathered.

“Hanged himself!” cried he, as he pushed among the crowd. “How do you know?”

“Here,” replied the man, who had given the intelligence, “you can see him, by peeping through the crevice.”

“Aye, indeed,” exclaimed the prefect, with a pallid and perturbed countenance, “there he is. But how is the door fastened?”

The hreppstiorè now arrived in a dreadful fright.

“This—this is a sad affair,” said the prefect.

“Yes, it is,” said the hreppstiorè; “but ‘t is no fault of mine, for I did n’t know he was going to do it. How is this? I can’t open the door.”

“Your hand trembles,” observed the prefect. “Here, let me.” And then giving the door a jerk, it flew open.

“Why, it was not fastened!” he exclaimed.

The melancholy spectacle was now visible to all; and there was not one who did not feel a thrill of horror. The prefect stopt in, but was so much affected that he was almost unmanned; indeed, he seemed in doubt whether he would return and give vent to his feelings, or boldly examine the revolting circumstances of the catastrophe. His duty, however, as chief

magistrate, compelled him to do the latter; and hence, with a trembling hand he touched the body, which swung round, and lo! the multitude saw that it was stuffed wadmal!! The prefect was thunderstruck. The people stared vacantly for a moment; and then, involuntarily holding their sides, set up such a chorus of laughter, as astounded those who were coming up to the scene with long and anxious faces. The peal was rung most cheerily and boisterously. The prefect shifted out of sight as soon as convenient, and the hreppstiði made himself scarce, for the laugh was partly against both. The waggish ruffian it seems had escaped, having tied his dark wadmal coverlet into the form of a man, and suspended it from a beam. The door was fastened with a bit of wood.

How Waldi contrived to liberate himself is hard to say, for the door was strongly fastened; however, he was more skilful in avoiding the penalties of the law, than the Sida people were in securing prisoners.

The sysselman, who fell in coming down the steps of the court-house, did not arrive until the excitation and merriment were over.

As Gudbrand was walking homeward, Farmer Eiskeglam (who had recovered from the effects of his collision with Gruntby, excepting a slight lameness) overtook him. "I am thankful," said he, "that Waldi is gone. I have no doubt that Divine Providence brought about all this.—I have faith enough to satisfy me on that head."

"My dear friend!" exclaimed Gudbrand, "you evince more faith than judgment; or I may say, more credulity than either;—for there is, very frequently, trust or confidence without faith. For instance, a man desires a thing, and his desire being strong insensibly passes into hope, and then it is mistaken for genuine faith. We must be careful in these matters, or we shall fall into great errors. I do not believe that Waldi's escape arose from the immediate interference of Providence; for if so, the frolic of the wadmal effigy may have arisen from the same source."

“No, no, I don’t think so; there is a great difference in the two.”

“Yes, there is,” said Gudbrand; “but there is a similarity in this respect: one would as well agree with the dignity of Divine Providence, as the other with his justice. However, now that Waldi is gone, we shall not, I expect, see him again. He is gone, I hope, for ever.”

“Yes, yes, I hope,” said farmer Eiskeglam.

Vola happened to be at the prison when the hanged effigy of Waldi was discovered, and she arrived home before her father.

“My dear mother!” she exclaimed, almost breathless, “get yourself ready, and set off immediately, for Waldi Freyde and Arnas Balderson are gone—two men in one: don’t let your true love fly by himself—this is not sociable, mother!”

“What do you mean, Vola?” inquired Thorna.

“Why I mean what I say, that Waldi is gone, gone, and never will be seen again in this part of the civilised world, by man or woman, lover or hater. He is gone to sea, I

have no doubt, where he used to be; and there, perhaps, he will meet with Marfrede, and give him a stomach-full of servitude. Alas! alas! for poor Thorna! but —”

Gudbrand now enters. “Gunlög, Thorna, Galmina, all of you!” he exclaimed, as he sat down, “the stir is over, or indeed begun; for Waldi is gone, and no one knows where. I suppose there will be searching for him; but the fellow is crafty, he won’t be taken.”

“Is he really gone?” inquired Galmina: “for, if so, I am not sorry; but I hope this country will never see him again.”

Thord and Eggert now entered. “Well,” said the former, “I never saw any thing like this before; but I am sorry for it: I must say I should like to have seen the fellow hanged.”

“No, no,” exclaimed Eggert, “t is best as it is.”

“Why, if he had not been hung here,” replied Thord, “he ought to have been hung in Denmark.”

“My dear!” said Gunlög, “I am sure I should not have felt easy for a long time, if

Waldi had been executed here; for I should have been continually fancying I saw his dead body before me: and even if he had been sent to Denmark, I should have been very anxious about him."

"There is a reason for this," cried Vola. "My dear father! have you no eyes, no ears, no understanding? Cannot you perceive that our dear mother's heart is drawn away after Arnas Balderson? Are you not fearful of losing your partner—your wandering bosom-friend?"

"Hush, hush, child! I am under no fear," replied Gudbrand, taking the hand of his agitated partner, and giving her a hearty kiss; "I am under no fear in this matter. Thirty years of uninterrupted and affectionate union put an end to misgivings. Visible bonds weaken with age; but the invisible bonds of love strengthen with years. No, no, I have no uneasiness in the matter."

"We have lived together in peace," responded Gunlöd; "and thus, I hope, we shall die."

"My dear Vola," said Galmina, "why do

you make such abrupt, such pain-exciting remarks? It is an unamiable kind of pleasure which arises from another's pain."

"If others, my dear," said Gunlög to her thoughtless daughter, while tears glistened in her eyes, "were as regardless of your feelings as you are of theirs, you would have much to mortify and pain you."

"I always speak what I think," said Vola: "is not that better than to think one thing and say another?"

"My dear child," observed Gudbrand, "sincerity is better than hypocrisy; but sincerity may consist with tenderness and benevolence. If the heart is tuned correctly, it may express its feelings, but not otherwise. From the mountains, as you well know, sometimes streams of fire, and sometimes streams of clear and grateful waters, descend: the former are as true and natural as the latter, but not so desirable. Thus, in the mind, there may be feelings of an exciting, uncharitable, burning kind; these should be quenched and utterly destroyed: but when the waters of benevolence and love

exist there, let them by all means come forth, and let us bless God for them."

"Father," said Vola, "we shall, I hope, live long enough to grow out of our defects."

"Defects, my dear, become weak or strong in proportion as we indulge them. It is the interest of every one, both in respect of this world and the next, to check his evil dispositions. Oh! let us always consider that this life is but the passage to another, and that our future enjoyment depends on our present conduct."

"I believe," said Vola, "indeed I know, that your advice is excellent. I wish we were all as good as our dear father. But, after all, if Waldi Freyde and Arnas Balderson should prove to be the same, it would be very singular."

"Yes, yes," said Gudbrand, "the coincidence would be singular; but in respect of goodness, my dear, every one has room for improvement. Goodness is a word scarcely applicable to sinful man. It is true that some have more need than others to be careful of particular sins; but

all must confess, in the dust of humility, that they are unprofitable servants, and that it is their duty to lament over the actual presence of defects, rather than glory in the fancied absence of them."

CHAP. XVII.

MUCH time was spent in searching for Waldi; indeed, the country was scoured in almost all directions; but he could not be found. The Sida people were determined not to be outwitted by the female robber, and hence they stationed two men constantly as guards before the prison, until, in the course of two or three days, she was shipped for Copenhagen.

Sida was now free from alarm — the storm had subsided. “We shall,” said Eyvind Stein-gum to old Gudbrand, “if we be permitted to behold future years, look back on this period with some interest. I have lived in the parish for thirty summers, and I have never before known so many wonderful events as have happened this year. The slight trembling of the earth which we had about six months ago was, I believe, the first great cause of alarm.”

“ You forget the sickness in 1749,” said Gudbrand ; “ that was a fearful time.”

“ Yes,” replied Eyvind, “ I forgot that ; but we ought, certainly, to be mindful of the dangers through which a merciful Providence has brought us. I forgot the sickness just when I spoke.”

“ I have heard,” said Gudbrand, “ that in the fourteenth century a dreadful pestilence visited this island, which was appropriately called ‘ Black Death,’ and it swept away nearly all the inhabitants. During this terrible event the air was filled with a dense vapour, which obscured almost every object. That was a time of darkness and death. We shall, I hope, never experience anything so awful as that : but, when Thorsby was dying the other day, she said that calamities greater than we have known would come on our unfortunate country. Whether they will happen in your days and mine, I know not ; but if so, I hope God will give us strength to meet them. How old are you ?”

“ I am now sixty-seven,” replied Eyvind.

“ Why, you are two years older than I am,”

said Gudbrand. "Sixty-seven, and I sixty-five; we are rapidly approaching the period when the life of man is said to be labour and sorrow. I have experienced many troubles; but I have found life, on the whole—and I thank the Divine Being for it—worth possessing."

"What part of life," inquired Eyvind, "have you found most pleasant?"

"I do not know whether or not I am singular, but I have found the latter half more pleasant than the former."

"Age more pleasant than youth! I am surprised at that. A worthy friend of mine used to say that our early days are joyous, and our latter ones gloomy. 'Youth,' he observed, 'is spring—it is a time of verdure, and fragrance, and music; age is winter—it is a time of darkness, and chilliness, and woe.' On another occasion he said, 'There is no comparison in the pleasingness of the pictures, for youth is depicted on the sunshine of life—his very sorrows are little more than the rainbows of a summer's day; but age is depicted on the gloom,

the awful background of eternity.' I have myself," continued Eyvind, "been impressed with the conviction that life is worth little after forty. And whether this be true or false I know not, or whether the opinion made me dissatisfied; but this I know, I have experienced little enjoyment since that period."

" My dear Eyvind," said Gudbrand, " yours is a false and dangerous theory. It is true, if a man thinks himself unhappy he is so, and no persuasion can make him otherwise; but happiness depends on feelings rather than circumstances — on internals rather than externals. Handsome dwellings, costly apparel, and other possessions are valued (indeed I saw enough of this in Denmark); but if these things were thought disgraceful, or the badge of fools, they would not be contributive to enjoyment. By the same rule, if men contemplate mature age as a period of gloom, and when they arrive there think themselves necessarily cut off from the smiles of fortune, the blessings of Providence, and the comforts of life, they will become discontented and unhappy. Now I

tell you why I thought an advanced stage of life contributive to happiness, and why I found it so. Childhood is a period of agitation — one in which cross and wayward dispositions spring up which require to be checked: this process is painful to the child. It is an age of rivalry and strong contention; for boys in their pastime do not always act agreeably with justice and good feeling; indeed, there is a great deal of tyranny and oppression among them. One is the strong man — the leader of the party — and all must bend to him. It is his will, frequently, to make the lesser boys quarrel among themselves. Sometimes there are two or three rival leaders, and the weaker boys must fight their battles. A thousand little occurrences — of considerable magnitude to little minds — contribute to make childhood a period of fear and uneasiness.

“ Then, when the stripling goes to school — if school there be, though in too many of our parishes there are none — he goes as the wild colt to the hands of the trainer; he goes, not to be indulged and flattered, but to be curbed and

beaten. Tyranny, too frequently, meets him wherever he turns—tyranny among his playmates, tyranny at school, tyranny at home—from an elder brother, or a surly parent. He improves himself but little, in this respect, when he begins to learn a business. If he works on a farm, or becomes a fisherman, or even a scholar, it is toil continually—*toil and disappointment*.

“Then comes the period of love and marriage, which is, in many respects, extremely pleasing; but I know, and so do most, that although the winning of the fair maiden is inexpressibly delightful, and the consciousness, the capability of saying, ‘That maiden is mine,’ raises the soul to ecstasy, yet there is, necessarily, much agitation of spirit—much anxiety and foreboding—even in a prosperous engagement; and if the course of events be adverse, a man’s condition is truly pitiable.

“Now, when the period of childhood is ended; when youth is fled; when the difficulties connected with learning a business, and the cares of entering on farming or other engagements

are over; when a wife has been long tried, and found faithful and affectionate; when children are grown up, and become capable of loving, honouring, and assisting their parents; when the constitution is formed and established; when the mind is turned occasionally, or indeed constantly, to the enchanting scenes of future life, and the soul becomes even desirous of changing its mortal for an immortal dress; when the things of earth are known, and those of heaven — in bright and dazzling glimpses — are beheld with an eye of faith; oh! then is the time that a person may and does enjoy the gift of existence. Man was intended to be happy even in this life. Shall I believe that the greater portion of enjoyment was intended for a premature state, and that as a man advances to the full exercise of his mental powers, and becomes in some degree a fit companion for the higher orders of beings, he sinks into darkness and wretchedness? Shall I believe that in proportion as he rises from the animal enjoyments of youth, and becomes an intellectual being, and dwells, as it were, in the hidden

temple of his mind, the streams of rational enjoyment fail, and man becomes unfit for existence?"

Gudbrand and Eyvind had been standing together near the dwelling of the former, and just at this moment they were joined by Herrick Paulsen.

"You seem to have been busily engaged in conversation," said Herrick.

"We have not been very busy," replied Gudbrand; "or at least, not very long about it."

"Which things," replied Herrick, "are very different from each other."

"Yes, yes, they are different," said Gudbrand. "You young men, and especially you poets, are so much accustomed to thinking—to considering and weighing the meaning of words—that you discover immediately any impropriety of speech."

"Why, as to youth, I am not very young—just perhaps in the prime of life; at any rate, old enough to know that a little quickness of perception is very different from wisdom. The

mind in its greater movements proceeds slowly — like the morning-light beaming from behind the horizon, faintly at first, then more brightly, and still more brightly, until the day appears in all its glory: whereas the quickness to which you allude is like the lightning bursting from the midst of darkness, which dazzles for a moment and then vanishes."

"I thought I knew the voice," exclaimed Sira Gudmerson, who had been standing for a moment outside the wall which hid the speaker from his view. "But, Herrick, you are certainly wrong — wrong in your opinions and illustrations. The light of the sun and the brightness of day are not adapted for illustrating human wisdom. Human wisdom is comparatively dark — it seldom reaches to twilight: it is Divine wisdom only that can be represented by the splendour of the sun. The better illustration would be — instead of day — night: wisdom is the luminary of night, wit is the shooting star, poetry is the aurora borealis. But quickness of perception is as necessary in great movements of the mind as in small ones. The leader of an

army (and this we may know from our Sagas) was required to be as quick in his perceptions when he directed the whole of his forces, as when he gave orders to a single company; or when he raised a fort, as when he pitched a tent. Indeed, great and important matters require more quickness than smaller ones: but the difference is (and this is the cause of the error), a great matter is an accumulation of inferior ones, and what we term a small matter is something of an individual character. I think that quickness of perception in ordinary engagements or conversation is not indicative of shallowness; nor is the capability of using words ingeniously, so as to produce wit, indicative of an ignorance of things. A great deal depends on the habits of a person. If he has been almost secluded from society, as some of our clergy have been—buried among their books and papers, and only rising from the company of the dead—if I may so term it—on the Saturday, to preach to the living on the Sunday, and his studies have been of a laborious and spirit-depressing kind, why then he will be slow and heavy in his move-

ments; but if he has mixed much with cheerful society, he will be much more lively. A great deal depends also on natural disposition — on buoyancy of spirits — distinct from intellectual endowments. However, a considerable accumulation of knowledge, long experience, and a vigorous mind are necessary in order to generate wisdom. We shall find more wisdom in the aged, on this account; we shall find more quickness in the young, because their minds are buoyant, owing to a continual flow of animal spirits; and we shall perceive the union of both when man has risen above the condition of youth, and has not sunk into the shades of imbecility. I value therefore, very much, the opinions of such men as our friends Gudbrand and Eyvind. I am, it is true, creeping on after them in regard to age; but I am several years behind, and I have had less intercourse with the world than they."

"But your opportunities of reflecting on what you have seen, and your capability of doing so," replied Gudbrand, "have given you an advantage over me and my friend."

“Our engagements have been different,” said Sira Gudmerson; “consequently, you know more of the actual working, and I of the theory, of things. You can tell what has been, I may be able to guess what will be.”

“Then, if that is the case,” said Eyvind, “I wish you would tell me whether the former or the latter part of life will be more contributive to enjoyment.”

“If men were to act agreeably with the designs of God,” replied the clergyman, “they would without doubt improve, both intellectually and morally, until the earthly tenement began to break up as a preliminary to the removal and exaltation of the soul. Hence, the latter half of life would be productive of more real enjoyment than the former half.”

“That is just my opinion,” observed Gudbrand.

“Now that happiness is the subject,” said Herrick Paulsen, “what do you think of matrimony as a source of enjoyment?”

“I think,” said Sira Gudmerson, “that matrimony generally is productive of great advantage. Unfortunately, there are many exceptions; but these arise from the unreasonable and unchristian conduct of mankind. In matrimony, the happiness of the individual is less dependent on himself than in a state of celibacy; hence, it is necessary there should be a similarity of tastes and feelings; otherwise, one will take one direction, and another another, while the result will be the breaking asunder of the bonds of harmony and bliss.”

“A happy marriage,” said Herrick, “must be happiness indeed. Oh! if a person could enjoy what the imagination sometimes paints, how delightful it would be! I would be married immediately, if” —

“If,” said Gudbrand, smiling, “you could get any one to have you.”

“Oh! perhaps that would not be so difficult; but I was going to say, if I should find it so delightful as I have sometimes supposed. Now

if the last link in the chain — the experience of it, be possessed, the former ones — the entering into marriage, the procuring of a wife, &c., must follow."

"Now," said Gudbrand, "our friend has been making nice distinctions again; but I, though an old man, have quickness enough to perceive that the gaining of a wife would not *follow* the experience of matrimony, but rather precede it."

"Yes, yes," said Herrick, laughing, "you are quite right. That was a slip of mine."

"But tell us," said Gudbrand, "how it was that you never *slipt* into matrimony."

"I can scarcely tell, except that I have been imagining, and then observing, and then fearing, and then postponing. I have sometimes lingered on the brink of matrimony; at one moment looking on it with an admiring eye, and then fearing to launch my bark on its waves, and bid farewell for ever to my accustomed land, that I might seek for greater delights at the risk of shipwreck and death; and then — why then, I have turned back."

“ Oh ! you timid, poor mortal,” exclaimed Eyvind.

“ Not so,” said Sira Gudmerson. “ Herrick is a man of an imaginative mind, and, I should think, of much sensibility. If a person of this description — who has painted the bliss of happy marriage in glowing colours, and the misery of an unhappy one in deep, in awful shades — should enter into it, and find it less attractive than he had hoped, he would be plunged immediately into despondency ; and not only would his own peace, for a time, be destroyed, but the peace of his companion, who might not be culpable, would be wofully diminished. This imaginative disposition, and these poetical vagaries, ought not, however, to be encouraged in respect of the affairs of life. They may be employed about the occurrences of the past — of the early ages — which, being veiled in mystery, afford excellent haunts for the imagination ; or the attention may be directed to things above us, or to those almost obscured in the distant prospect ; indeed, any where but in connection with realities : for in

the former cases, there might be no disappointment; but in the latter, disappointments are sure to arise. I say that, if there be doubts as to the advantage of a change from a single to a married life—in fact, if there be not powerful motives towards it, it is better to wait until the motives arise. A man may live comfortably out of matrimony; and when he finds that he is becoming uncomfortable, and no change will probably make him worse, then let him step in, when perhaps he will find it better than he expected, and the contrast of the reality with the expectation will make matrimony, what it should be, a source of enjoyment. All this, however, refers, not to the great mass of mankind, but to the few in whom there happens to be more of the intellectual than the sensual; for people generally are moved by a sort of animal love, and they herd together, feed together, and live and die together, without much philosophy or imagination, much fore-thought or after-thought."

“I dare say, Sira Gudmerson,” said Herrick, “you have considered this matter a little; for, like myself, you have never married.”

“I have frequently thought on it,” replied the clergyman. “I approve of marriage in its general application to mankind; and, indeed, my approval is not needed, for it was approved and appointed by God; however, there may be exceptions, and we have the sanction of Scripture for them. Marriage was appointed as a means of peopling the earth, and as a safeguard for virtue. The former—as far as it relates to the welfare of the world—will never enter into the consideration of a person; the latter should always do so. But marriage is useful in other respects. It gives man a companion; it causes many pleasing and virtuous dispositions to spring up, or, if already sprung up, to be cherished; and it is only when the natural dispositions of man are turned into another tract, and furnished with sources of enjoyment, that he can be happy without marriage. If the love of learning be powerful,

why then man has a companion in his books ; and if he have a love for all that is lovely in the works of nature, and the productions of the human intellect, and in virtue, his natural dispositions may still be cherished ; and he will not become, as he otherwise would be, a withered plant — cut off from the streams of earth and the dews of heaven — but he will flourish amidst fountains of waters and tranquil sunshine.”

“ Now, as you have evidently thought pretty much on the subject,” said Herrick, “ perhaps you will be so kind as to tell us what you think of the entering into matrimony in later life, if a person were so inclined.”

“ Oh ! then,” exclaimed Gudbrand, laughing, “ you have still a hankering towards matrimony !”

“ I still keep it in view,” replied Herrick. “ I may never be married ; but I would not, for the world, that any prohibition should be laid on me, which would infallibly exclude me from it. What is done in the matter I should like to do freely.”

“Yes, yes,” said Sira Gudmerson; “that is quite natural. If the king of Denmark were to prohibit the marriage of the inhabitants of Iceland, I should be one of the first to appeal against it. My chance of marrying is much less than yours. I suppose I shall never marry; but the consciousness of having the right to do so is pleasing. In respect of the time at which a person may enter into matrimony, I answer, any period in which he possesses vigorous health; and there are cases, wherein the advantages of companionship may allow even the weakly to marry.”

“What is the proper proportion of age in the male and female?” inquired Herrick.

“I think that if people marry when they are young, the ages ought to be nearly equal. From thirty to sixty there should be a gradual increase of age on the side of the man; and if, for the sake of companionship, persons marry after that period, I see no reason why, in approaching to second childhood, the ages may not again become nearly equal. Age, however, is not always the best guide in forming a union; for

one may be as young in constitution and spirits at thirty as another at five and twenty ; and love, with a disparity of age on the wrong side, is infinitely better than a due proportion of years without a proper adaptation of feelings. I have found that the average ages of the persons that I have married (persons married for the first time), has exceeded twenty-six.”*

“ Do you think,” inquired Herrick, “ that matrimony in later life is productive of as much enjoyment as in earlier life ?”

* Marriages are later in Iceland than in many other countries of Europe. Every clergyman keeps a register of the name, abode, period of birth and marriage, number and ages of children, with the character and abilities of every person in his parish. This method has been lately adopted by many clergymen in England. Here, however, we have a great number of flocks, and divers diverse shepherds; but in Iceland all the inhabitants of a parish (with scarcely an exception) are under the spiritual guidance of the *Sira*, or father. It is a singular circumstance that although the Icelanders have been very intelligent, and much engaged in investigation, while their neighbours have been mentally asleep, yet, excepting the great change from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism, they have never been unsettled in religious matters, nor ever given birth to a single heresy.—Vide “ *Alfonsi de Castro, adversus omnes Hereses,* ” &c.

“ I think not,” replied the clergyman; “ but this is no argument against it; for the passions of long-married persons are not as fresh and buoyant as formerly. The question for the unmarried is not, ‘ Are my feelings and dispositions the same as twenty years ago; and if I marry now, shall I receive the same enjoyment as if I had married then?’ No, certainly; all must grow old: and in forming an estimate of the condition of one state or the other, or of a change from single to married life, lines must be drawn through parallel years; but this is generally forgotten.”

“ Suppose, however,” said Herrick, “ that persons were married in the middle or the decline of life, and there was not a mutual adaptation of disposition, &c., what would be the result? — And we must remember that the temper is less yielding in later than in earlier life.”

“ I reply, if there be little adaptation of one for the other, it will be happy if the marriage be late, for there will be a shorter continuance of the evil. And as to pliability, if the indi-

viduals have led domestic, but not solitary lives — if they have been accustomed to mix with persons of different ages, and induced, even moderately, to suit their dispositions to the feelings of others they will not be very stiff, morose, or unyielding ; — not more so, perhaps, than persons of the same age who have been long accustomed to a matrimonial life. There are disadvantages connected with every period of life ; and a merciful Providence has distributed the good of existence pretty equally over every part of it. In early years, there are many jealousies, heart-burnings, frivolities, &c., which do not exist in riper age. And even if matrimony be not so productive of enjoyment when a man enters it late in life, let him remember that he has received all the good — or a considerable share of it — which could be gained from a single state ; he has lived many years free from domestic anxieties. If people marry early, it is probable that one will be left for many years alone ; in this case, the loneliness is very distressing, even if there be children, because the children are grown up,

and have offspring instead of progenitors to engage their attention ; but, with the most attentive children, there is no substitute for the deceased partner. And if widows or widowers re-marry, there is no more probability that they would be mutually yielding, than there would be of those at the same age, who had not led retired lives, and had not previously married. Besides, in the former case, there is frequently the clashing of different families, which in the latter is avoided. There are circumstances, and there are characters, which would make marriage unhappy at any age ; and there are others which would make it a source of much enjoyment."

"Really," exclaimed Herrick, "I am quite delighted—I am quite comforted with the hopes which you have caused to beam around me. But—but—I shan't be married yet!" And then, suddenly departing, the others, with smiles on their countenances, separated—each for his own home.

Before we conclude this chapter, although it will occasion a sudden transition, we may say

a few words more respecting Thord, Galmina, and Lara. Their parents were dead, and their property was under the care of an uncle. When the young people signified an intention of travelling, their relatives advised them not to proceed alone ; and they would probably have taken a guide, but Thord was headstrong, and would not listen to it. Youthful inadvertency, however, as we have seen, led to serious evils.

“ My dear Galmina,” said Gunlöd, after she had listened to these particulars from the lips of the maiden, “ that is what I condemn in young persons ; they do not sufficiently value the counsel of their elders, until they themselves approach the period of maturity, and then—as I have heard our clergyman observe—‘ having had experience and paid for it, the advice of others is not so needful.’ ”

As Thord and Galmina intended to spend a few months in Sida, they engaged a neat little dwelling, belonging to a person who was about to remove to Rekiavik. We must consider the young persons, therefore, for the present, as residents of Sida.

CHAP. XVIII.

IT has been stated that Thord Thordalston had conceived a strong regard for Thorna Magnusson. This feeling became more and more powerful until it conquered every other, and established itself as the ruling principle of his conduct, so that he could think of nothing scarcely but what referred, in some degree, to the attainment of the amiable Thorna. His health was become sound, and his reasoning faculties possessed their wonted vigour; indeed, since the day of the funeral, there had been no aberration of mind perceptible in the recent maniac. His disposition was extremely ardent; he was no calculator of causes and results; but passion, very frequently, carried him beyond the boundary of reason. Pleasing objects in his view became dazzling; his whole attention was absorbed by them; he could see no beauty or amiableness in what was different: displeasing

objects, on the other hand, excited strong disgust ; — indeed, as a general rule, what he approved he violently loved, and what he disliked he violently hated. Too often, being hurried onward by his feelings, he did not hesitate to do what a calmer person, on a similar occasion, would have shrunk from ; hence it is no cause of wonder that, as Thord loved Thorna he adopted every means, lawful or otherwise, to win her.

The maiden, on the other hand, was sincerely attached to Marfrede ; and consequently could not accept the attentions of Thord, but did what she could to check the passion which was rising within him. The repulse of a beloved maiden, however, like that of a zephyr contending with flame, only increases the strength of what it opposes. When love is powerful, if it be met by gentle opposition — by the resistance of an amiable spirit — it burns more clearly and brightly. Slight difficulties excite desire ; and when difficulties seem to be slight, hope is increased.

“ Perseverance,” said Thord to himself, “ is

generally successful ; therefore, I will try what it can do. I will endeavour also to gain the good graces of Vola and her mother ; but if, by any means, a correspondence between Marfrede and Thorna could be prevented, that would be a most happy event !”

Whatever is contributive to our apparent welfare is, in most instances, approved and thought to be just ; hence Thord began to fancy that he ought to possess Thorna. He believed that no one loved her more ; and in this case, perhaps, he was correct ; for dishonourable love may be as powerful, and more ungovernable than love of a virtuous kind. The difference in the two is, that one is more sensual and the other more spiritual : one riots in the grosser passions, the other abides in the finer sensibilities — pure and lovely in itself, and shedding loveliness around. Thord supposed that no one could contribute more than he to the wishes and happiness of Thorna ; but in this respect he was greatly mistaken ; for a happy union is dependant on virtue, not only in respect of the more prominent features, but also the

more delicate lines. Low, sensual love seeks for selfish gratification, and cares little for the welfare of others: virtuous love is like mercy—it blesses the agent and the object. Besides, happiness in matrimony is dependant on a natural adaptation of one character for the other. By adaptation is not meant a similarity of qualities, for this is not necessary. Chemical union—the change of two substances into one, and therefore the best emblem of matrimony, is not constituted of similar, but dissimilar natures. Hence the strength of man may consist with the delicacy of woman; his courage with her timidity; his somewhat boisterous and benevolent heart with her gentle and yielding manners. But as there must not be similarities—which would be unnatural, and would excite rivalry—so there must not be contraries; for fire and water cannot dwell together. There must be an appropriation of one for the other; so that those who are so joined should be capable of feeling that it is as it should be. This, however, could not be the case with Thorna and Thord.

In another respect, however, Thord was right. He believed that he was superior to his rival in respect of property; and he knew that he had the good wishes of the family: but these, although desirable, are not the most important in the view of a maiden who seeks for a union which shall be permanently happy. Thord had omitted one essential matter — the inclination and honour of Thorna; but, being hurried on by strong desires and glowing hopes, he was determined if possible to succeed.

An event now happened which was attended with important consequences. Marfrede had been absent for nearly two months, but Thorna had said little about him, for she had perceived, with much sorrow, that her friends were unfavourable to the union; hence she could expect, in her distress, but little advice or sympathy from them. She was like a delicate flower, in the winter, thrust out of the green-house, to live or perish in its loveliness. Even Vola, who was the nearest to her own age, and had been, in many instances, her confidant, seemed now inclined to cast her off. Thorna was daily ex-

pecting to hear from Marfrede; indeed the long delay had caused something like feverish excitement; and at every sound, she was roused by the hope that the wished-for letter was arrived. After waiting long, her soul sank within her, and she gave way, occasionally, to gloomy speculations. Sometimes she thought that he must be ill — perhaps, dead; but then she reflected, if it were so, she should have heard of it. This speculative inquiry generally drew towards a close with a mortifying suspicion of his constancy, and was finally terminated with a more favourable opinion of him, and even with a sort of hoping against hope — or against the circumstances which usually occasion hope. Even Marfrede's relations had received no letter from him, but had heard, by accident, that he was arrived in Copenhagen. About this time, Vola was on the sea-coast, not far from Sida, among some fishermen's huts, when a woman came and said, "My dear! are you from Sida?"

"Yes."

"Will you take a letter for me?"

Vola expressed her compliance.

“Then,” said the woman, “I will bring it in a moment.”

She ran into her house, and brought it out.

“This letter,” said she, “was given to my boy at sea last night. The captain of a vessel threw it into his boat. The vessel was bound to an eastern port.”

Vola found it directed for Thorna; and, with a fluttering heart, almost without thanking the woman, sat off for home; but in proceeding she began to speculate on what she should do with it. Rectitude, of course, takes one direction only; and in proportion as we linger on this side or that, we shall be inclined to go astray. Moral perception, like the perception of taste, is most correct when it acts without previous reasoning.

“I do not like Marfrede,” said Vola; “Thord is a much better fellow; indeed he would do exactly for my sister. I wonder she cannot see it. Poor girl! she scarcely seems capable of judging. I think I must judge for her. However, I will go to Thord, and show him the letter before I deliver it.”

Vola walked towards the house. Galmina was gone to neighbour Gudbrand's, and no one was at home but her brother, who was standing at the door — the entrance to which consisted of a pathway bordered by a few small gooseberry bushes — and, approaching, she exhibited a part of the letter. Thord guessed immediately what it was, and his heart beat high with hope, as he came out to meet the maiden.

“What—what is that?” he eagerly inquired.

“Something worth looking at.”

“Is it a letter from Marfrede?”

“It is.”

“Here, come in, and let me look at it,” said he, with much agitation.

“Do n’t be alarmed about it. We have the letter now, and we will not part with it immediately.”

“But how?”

“Never mind how or where; I will, I think, be the disposer of my sister’s affections. Really, she scarcely seems to know how to dispose of them. My dear Thord! you and I are capable of judging. You wish to have her, do n’t you?”

Yes, yes," colouring deeply; "I wish to have her; but——"

"Well, and I wish for you to be gratified — though, as to the gratification I cannot say how much you will have. However she is a good sort of girl, but we are as capable of judging as she is — perhaps more so, for she is a party concerned; and so in truth are you: one then must go into the scale against the other, and both I believe are light; however, I am impartial, and my opinion must decide the matter. Nothing can be more just, liberal, or consistent than this."

"My dear Vola, I am much obliged for your good wishes; and, without doubt, you will do what you can for me. I do n't know how it is, but if I do not obtain Thorna I shall never be happy."

"Now that's nonsense!"

"No it is not. I know I shall never be fit for anything."

"That, my boy, would be nothing new."

"Now, Vola, you are jeering me."

"Well, I mean to be sober. We may keep the letter a little while."

“ There would be no harm,” said Thord, “ in doing so for a day or two. She does n’t know it is come, and the delay would be no injury to her — no more than if it had been detained in the vessel. I wish she would give up all thoughts of that fellow. I wish he would ship himself for Iceland, and be drowned ! ”

“ O Thord ! ” exclaimed Vola, “ that is going too far. I should not like for Marfrede to slip out of the world immediately, poor fellow ! but I should like for him to slip out of Thorna’s good graces. However, the letter may be, and must be, kept for a day or two. She fancies now that every breeze is whispering the arrival of news from Marfrede ; and she thinks that the breezes would bear it in their bosom as lovingly as she herself would ; but the breezes if they whispered any thing,” she continued, smiling, “ would say they had nothing. And now Thord, how shall we dispose of the letter ? — Where shall we put it ? ”

“ I cannot tell,” said he: “ I am afraid Galmina will see it. Perhaps it would be better to bury it in the ground. I can wrap it, you know, in a piece of paper.”

“The very plan, my dear Thord! May all your fears be buried with it.”

“Never to rise again?”

“Yes, never. I do n’t care much if we have no resurrection of either.”

“That would hardly do. We must I suppose have a resurrection at some time,” said Thord; “but——”

“No, *buts*,” replied Vola. “We have the letter, and we will keep it until we can keep it no longer — until the uneasiness of Thorna compels us to part with it. I shall now go home, and endeavour to put on a countenance of great indifference. Do n’t be so silly as to mention this affair. I have been thinking again,” she continued, after a pause, “perhaps it would be better for the letter to be taken up to-morrow, if Thorna should be uneasy: however, I shall see you again.”

Vola went home; and Thord, wrapping the letter in a piece of paper, buried it in the garden. After he had done so, he felt some curiosity to exhume it and examine the contents; but he had honour enough to prevent him from this act of piracy.

On the following morning, he said to Galmina, "Did you hear the rain last night?"

"Yes: it was very heavy."

At that moment, Thord remembered that the letter was only two or three inches below the surface of the ground, and consequently not defended from the rain. He became suddenly very pale.

"What is the matter?" inquired Galmina.

"O, nothing," said he.

After a few minutes, he went into the garden, turned up the wet earth, and found the letter drenched with water and stained with mud. A deathlike chill ran through his veins. He literally trembled with horror. What could he do? The letter was almost destroyed. It is too little to say that he felt sorry for what he had done; the truth is, his feelings were so powerful — the sense of his dishonour so acute — that he could not, by any definite reflection, express the abhorrence which he felt of himself. He became very sick, and going in said he must lie down for a few minutes. His sister was alarmed, and wished to attend him; but he

begged her to let him alone, and said that it would soon pass away.

When he was by himself, he felt most deeply the awkward and disgraceful condition into which his imprudence had brought him. He saw no way in which he could escape from it; indeed, thoughts rushed so tumultuously on him, that he could do nothing but lament, and condemn himself for his misconduct.

“This,” he exclaimed, bitterly, “is what comes of underhand, dishonest proceedings. A man is a fool—a great fool, who will thus tamper with honour and character, and subject himself to misery like this!”

After some time, Thord arose from his bed, and walked abroad, in order to allay, if possible, the tumult of his mind. In the course of a few minutes Vola came, agreeably with her promise, and found Thord sitting on a bench in the garden, looking wan and wretched.

“What—how is this?” inquired Vola. “What makes you look so? I am come rather sooner than I expected, but I think I had better have the letter, and give it to Thorna. Poor girl!

I know she is sadly distressed; indeed, she is ——”

Thord became deadly pale, and uttered a deep groan.

“ What is the matter, Thord?” cried the maiden, in much alarm. “ My dear Thord, what is it?” And then, a suspicion arising, she added, “ There is nothing wrong, I hope, with the letter?”

The youth seemed as if struck by a bolt from heaven. He threw himself back on the seat, and for some minutes was incapable of motion, while Vola stood by in indescribable anxiety. Thord seemed desirous of using his lips, but there had been such a violent disruption between the muscles and the mind, that the latter could not immediately influence the former. At last, he moved his lips, and regaining the power of articulation exclaimed, “ Good God! have mercy on us! We are—we are both ruined. The letter is destroyed!”

Vola fell senseless at the feet of her companion; and now, Thord having viewed the occurrence in its darkest aspect, and confessed

the whole to Vola, suddenly felt relieved ; and raising the maiden, began to calm, if possible, the agitation which he had excited.

Consolation and hope arise from, or rather succeed, misery. The extreme of darkness is succeeded by gleamings of light. The anguish of Thord and Vola was followed by comparative calmness—a feeling of desperate indifference was beginning to arise, for the letter was destroyed ; there was no prevention or cure for that ; and no remedy is less distressing than the knowledge of one which is not available : they agreed therefore to keep the matter secret. “Indeed,” said Thord, “we must make ourselves believe that we have never seen the letter.”

CHAP. XIX.

Poor Thorna went on, day after day, expecting a letter from Marfrede, but was continually disappointed ; in the morning she had hope, in the evening despondency. When the youth had been absent about two months, she heard that his father had received a letter from him, giving an account of his arrival, and his prospects in Copenhagen ; but not a word was said of Thorna ; and the sensitive maiden was cut to the heart. “ Can it be so ? ” she exclaimed. “ Is Marfrede a deceiver ? Did he endeavour to win a pledge from me that he might forsake me, and leave me to the sport of my acquaintance ? O ! it cannot be ; what motive could he have to distress me ? ” And then she wept. However, she became ashamed of what she attributed to weakness, and summoning a little of her natural resolution, with the something-like-pride which is common to the sex, she said, “ If

it be so — if he has really and purposely neglected me — why then I will forget him ; or, at least, no one shall know that I remember him. However, I hope — or at least, I think — ” here the words died away on the maiden’s lips, for she had begun to express a decision before she had made one.

Very pleasing would it be if we could assert that this interesting girl received what she so much desired, and that the heart, which had been wounded by the caprice of fortune, and counsel of wickedness, had at length become calm and happy : but it was not so. Sometimes she was buoyed with brightening expectation, and at other times plunged into gloom. Sometimes she lamented the dissolution of the sacred and endearing bonds which had united Marfrede and herself from the days of childhood, and at other times she was moved with natural indignation.

Thord perceived the workings of Thorna’s mind, and did what he could to incense her against Marfrede. He had almost forgotten the painful feelings which had followed his trea-

cherous destruction of the letter, and he was evidently influenced by one consideration only. “ I will win this maiden, if possible ; and I will adopt whatever means are likely to be successful.” Hence he caused unfavourable reports to be spread of Marfrede’s conduct in Copenhagen — that he had associated with dissolute company, and had expressed not only indifference, but actual hatred and contempt for Thorna. To this it was added, that he paid attention to some pretty Danish maiden. These rumours were communicated to Thorna, with no little aggravation, by her relatives ; while the unfortunate silence of Marfrede, and his apparent neglect, gave a sanction to the reports, and the comments that were made on them. Sometimes the poor maiden was much distressed ; indeed the few gleamings of hope which timidly played around her on some occasions, scarcely served even for a day to tranquillise her feelings. “ Why does he not write ? Why does he maintain such an unreasonable, such a painful silence ? ” These were the sad questions which she frequently put to herself, and which remained unanswered.

Thorna was unwilling to condemn Marfrede until she had heard what his father said on the subject; and yet, as so much tattling had amused the neighbours, and Thorna was said to be neglected, and almost heart-broken, she did not like to call on Ianfreid Bergman, but requested her mother and Vola to go, and learn what they could on this unhappy affair.

Now Ianfreid Bergman disapproved of his son's conduct in meddling with love-matters. He did not dislike Thorna; for every one esteemed her: but he naturally concluded that if his son's mind was influenced by love, it would be prevented from employing its energies in the acquirement of learning, and hence his studies in Copenhagen would be almost profitless. And perhaps nothing unfits a person so completely for mental pursuits as this passion; for if a man is seated in his study—and seated there for the purpose of intellectual engagement—his mind will be drawn away by the most powerful attraction. It requires a little time, generally, in order to bring the mind into its most vigorous state; but if the passion of love be excited, the

intellect will be diverted from its purpose; and although the attention may, by a violent effort, be brought back now and then to literature or science, yet it will return to the bower of love, as a dove to its mate. In corporeal engagements, the results are different, for external objects are continually engaging our attention, and preventing us from revelling on imaginary delights. In the latter, a man retires from the regions of love; in the former, he approaches the enchanted territory. Hence Ianfreid's notions were just; and as he had received only one letter from Marfrede, he suspected that something still more objectionable than a love of Thorna existed. Indeed he had heard the reports, and although he had felt a father's indignation towards those who had propagated them, yet he had felt a father's fears lest they should be too well grounded. With these feelings on his part, and a disposition in Gunlöd and Vola to hear all that could be said against Marfrede, and to add darkening commentaries thereto, it is not surprising that the result of the conference was as unfavourable as could be for the

character of the youth, and the hopes of Thorna. When the latter listened to the accounts which were given by her mother and Vola, she could scarcely conceal her grief and vexation. However she assumed, as much as possible, an aspect of indifference during the short time that she spent with them, and then, retiring to the *skemma* (a small half-darkened lumber room), gave vent to her feelings. In the room, besides clothing, saddles, and other articles, there was a small library ; and after she had wept away the burden of her sorrow, she took up a little MS. book of poems, written by Sira Biarne, the former minister of Sida, and presented by him, as a mark of esteem, to Gudbrand, when the clergyman was on his death-bed. It consisted partly of paraphrases of passages in the Old and New Testament. The eye of the maiden lighted on some lines which she thought applicable to herself. It was a paraphrase of Jonah ch. iv. vers. 6, 7, 8 :

“ From scorching suns by day,
And chilling dews by night,
This lovely gourd a shelter is,
And pleasing to the sight.”

Thus spake the holy man,
And praised the God of heav'n ;
But in the morn, a deadly worm
His fondest hopes had riv'n.

Then fill'd with sorrow sore,
He smote upon his breast ;
And cried, while bitter tears roll'd down,
‘Earth is no place of rest !’

This earth is sorrow's home,
No comfort can it give,
Its smiles are nought but gilded frowns,
‘Tis better die than live !’

On which Thorna altered it a little, and made it still more appropriate to herself :

“ From anxious thoughts by day,
And gloomy cares by night,
The bower of love a shelter is,
And pleasing to the sight.

Thus spake the joyous maid —
To dazzling fancies giv'n —
But soon, alas ! a deadly worm
Her fondest hopes had riv'n.

Then fill'd with sorrow sore,
She smote upon her breast,
And cried, ‘from anxious painful cares,
Earth is no place of rest.’

This earth is sorrow's home,
No comfort can it give;
Its smiles are nought but gilded frowns,
"Tis better die than live!"

On turning over a leaf of the book, she found a couple of verses, written, apparently, by a female whom Thorna supposed to have been the sister of Sira Biarne, who had died about twelve months before her brother. Thorna had read the lines before, but now they seemed to have a peculiar meaning — one which found a counterpart in her own feelings: —

"Torn from the object of her love,
The wounded spirit sighs;
Then hating all the things of earth,
To heav'n she lifts her eyes.

She lifts her eyes to heav'n,
And breathes her feeble breath;
She lifts her eyes to heav'n again,
And closes them in death."

Overpowered with the reflections which crowded on her, Thorna threw herself back, and remained in a reverie for a considerable period; after which, she sank into sleep, and awoke much tranquillised.

Whenever it was apparent that Thorna was indignant at Marfrede's conduct, Thord endeavoured to insinuate himself into her good graces. The maiden, at first, repelled him rather roughly, for she had acquired a dislike of the sex ; but afterwards she suffered his advances. This was not so much because she loved him, as because she would punish Marfrede. "He," said she, "has been cruelly inattentive, and probably, after a short time, when his variable mind takes another direction he will endeavour to regain my affections — he will be warm and ardent in his attentions — but then he shall discover," she continued, with an emphasis quite unusual to her, "that the heart which he has thus cast away from him, has made its abode with another ! What he thus trifles with — if he continues to trifle with it — he shall never possess !"

When Thord perceived the change in Thorna's conduct, he was delighted, for he loved her exceedingly ; and Thorna suffered herself to be led, almost involuntarily, in the

any that her companion wished. Her excited feelings favoured Thord, but the calm, the steady bias of her mind was still towards Marfrede. How would she have rejoiced if Thord by some magical process, could have been transformed into Marfrede !

Although the suitor of Thorna gloried in his success, the maiden was far from being happy ; indeed her cheek became pale — the delicate rose-tints completely forsook it, except that, now and then, it was tinged with a hectic flush ; she lost almost all inclination for food ; she became timorous, restless, and desirous of solitude, so that she shunned the company of her dearest friends, and spent her time, as much as possible, apart from the sight and sound of human beings. The household, with a strange fatality, took less account of these changes, because they were pleased with the success of Thord.

A maiden who receives the attentions of a suitor merely because she has been neglected by another is, whatever she may think, on the

high road to misery. Her case is now pitiable, but it will become desperate. It is miserable to be bound with the cords of matrimony when there is no union of hearts — when there is perhaps, on the one part, a secret aversion; but to be obliged to dwell for twenty, thirty, or forty years in such a state is the very depth of wretchedness! In most instances, it is folly for a man to endeavour to win a woman who dislikes him, and it is madness to marry her; for love on one side only is worse than useless; in order that happiness may exist, the feeling must be mutual. The rays of the sun passing through (what would otherwise be) vacuity, occasions neither light nor warmth; the beamings of love falling on an unprepared or reluctant breast are lost; but when they fall on an honest and good heart, they are reflected back on their original source, while light, life, and joy are the happy results.

Let us carry our attention onward to the winter, and we shall find Thord, in some respect, the acknowledged suitor of Thorna. Nothing had been heard of Marfrede; indeed

nothing — not even his father — could tell where she was, or what occasioned his silence.

"If he has purposely neglected me," said Thorna, in one of her mournful soliloquies, "it will be just, if I think no more of him, and marry Thord. But if I could fancy — if I could see the slightest reason for supposing that he was innocent of the charges which have been brought against him; or even if I knew that he had repented of his ungenerous conduct; I would forget the past — yes, I would pray God to wrap it in everlasting oblivion — and I would yield my heart to him, which I believe has been faithful while even a gleam of hope has remained; or if I thought he was ill, and could not correspond with me, why then I would travel to the ends of the earth to serve him — to support his fainting head, or cheer his drooping spirits — for, poor fellow! he was at one time very kind to me; or, if, which God forbid! sudden sickness, or some dreadful accident has taken him hence, and closed his eyes in death, why then I would visit the land which possessed his remains, and

on his beloved grave, quench the fever of my soul, and weep away the indignation and mortified pride which have rankled in my breast. But," she continued, after a pause, in which tears, apparently unheeded by her, were trickling down her face, "he cannot be sick, he cannot be dead; for if so, some one would have informed his friends of it; and then, as to innocence or repentance, why has he not written? Why did he, in the letter to his father, studiously avoid mentioning my name? He promised that he would send to me frequently, and here," she continued, "he has not written to me at all! Can any thing be more unfeeling, more cruel than this? If the loss of his friendship were nothing, was it nothing that I should be kept in continual anxiety, and made an object of pity or ridicule to those around me?" After a pause, she added, "But I am indulging foolish and unprofitable complaints. Perhaps happiness is not designed for me on earth—indeed I have almost had reason to think so lately—and, if this be the

case, I may as well be unhappy in one way as another; hence I may as well disappoint myself of my dearest — yes, of my long-cherished, my almost life-supporting hopes, and give myself to Thord."

CHAP. XX.

WE must now turn our attention to Marfrede, who arrived at Copenhagen about a month after he had let Sida. The passage was long, and extremely tedious for one who before had scarcely gone from home. In the evening of the day on which he arrived, he sat down for the purpose of writing to Thorna ; and this was his first attempt at love-correspondence. He found however, as many a youth has done, that he could express his feelings more unreservedly by his pen than his tongue. The letter was given to the captain of a ship, and delivered into the hands of Vola.

On the next day he wrote to his father ; but, as he had written so lately to Thorna, he did not think of mentioning her name. Besides, he expected to have sent this letter by the same captain ; in which however he was disappointed, and was obliged to keep it for several

days before he met with an opportunity of sending it.

He calculated on hearing from Thorna in the middle of October. That period however arrived, and the end of October, and the middle of November, but there was no communication, which made him extremely anxious and unhappy. He received one letter from his father, which mentioned that Thorna was well, but nothing more was said about her. "This," thought Marfrede, "is most mysterious; for Thorna must have received my letter, and she might have written." Then, wandering into gloomy speculations, he almost involuntarily exclaimed, "No, it is no wonder she wished me to go, for she would rather perhaps —" His judgment, which for a moment was overcome by passion, now regained the mastery, and he exclaimed, "Dear girl! she could not have acted treacherously."

Poor Marfrede, however, gradually became unhappy, and almost distracted. While in this state, he wrote to Thorna, intreating her, if she valued his happiness, to send him a reply. He

sent a letter by the same captain to his father, requesting him to find out and explain the cause of Thorna's silence; but it is probable the vessel was lost, for neither of the letters reached Sida.

Marfrede still hoped that he should hear from Thorna, and he was constantly waiting for the glad tidings of a letter, but was doomed to perpetual disappointment. Often would he walk on the rampart of the citadel, and look, with an anxious eye and a palpitating heart, on the western horizon for vessels coming from Iceland. Sometimes he would perceive a sail just peeping above the dark waters, and hope—which, when it has no reality as a foundation, commences its castle-building on a fancy—animated and delighted him: but the vessel passed away in some other direction, or came from some other part of the world, or brought not what his heart desired. His visits were so constant at the citadel, as to attract the notice of the sentinels; but knowing, from his black cloak, that he was a student of the University, and having a notion that students

are a kind of inexplicable or nondescript beings, they paid the less attention to his absent and anxious demeanour.

Winter now began to set in, but there was no news from Iceland; the sea was soon frozen over, and all communication stopped; thus he had a gloomy prospect of, at least, three winter months, and no intelligence of her on whom his happiness depended. He was almost mad-dened when he thought of his condition. He had been accustomed to see Thorna almost every day; and hence the anticipation of being two months without seeing, or hearing of her, was almost more than he could bear; but now he had been nearly six months without receiving a single communication from her.

Marfrede had gone to Copenhagen for the purpose of studying; and truly he did study, but not what was required of him, for he neglected the pursuit of learning so much as to bring frequent censures on his conduct. His only excuse was that he was unwell.

His closet, which served him for a study and dormitory, was the witness of his sorrow: he

thought and wept; then wiped his eyes, and thought and wept again. How many poor creatures spend their hours in corporeal or mental anguish, while the world — the busy, bustling, selfish world — knows nothing of it. How many members of a family have painful days and nights appointed to them, while their relations, separated by distance, know nothing of it. How many a man is destined for great suffering, while a mere point of time stands between him and the dreadful consciousness. The traveller may laugh and talk, and make himself merry, over the very mail-bag which contains intelligence of the loss of his property, or that of his dearest friend! In the former instance, space, in the latter, time, is the barrier; but the latter progresses, and we soon know the reality; the former does not, and we may remain, in respect of the evil, for ever ignorant. Poor Marfrede was sitting in his room one night, reflecting on his solitary and unhappy condition; the lamp was extinguished; the beams of the moon, bright and beautiful, illuminated his chamber. "The same moon," he said, as he

turned and looked on her tranquil face, “that shines on my beloved Thorna. Oh! that it were possible for thee, thou lovely wanderer, to convey one ardent wish, one burning thought, to the neglectful maiden who has, perhaps unconsciously, caused my pain. Oh! that my words might float on thy silvery rays up to thyself, and then, choosing a new channel of light, glide down to the ears of my beloved Thorna! Convey, I intreat thee, this sentence; ‘Marfrede is still faithful, but unhappy.’ How much evil by thy means might be prevented — how much anxiety, pining away, and death — if thou wouldest become the medium of conveying thoughts and wishes, the explainer of mysteries, the dispeller of suspicion, the herald of peace! But no,” he continued, after a few moments, “thou canst not — Thou art deaf, thou art blind, thou art glittering, but cold — Thou art like the gods of the Heathen, and regardest not The God — the Creator of thee and of all things — the only being, whose ear is open to the sigh of distress; and to him will I address my prayers. Then, suiting the action to the words,

had bowed himself before the Father of Heaven, and prayed for a speedy deliverance from his troubles.

After this Christian and reasonable act, Marfrede felt himself somewhat composed ; but again he indulged in anxious thoughts, and again became depressed. The light of the moon had now left his room, and he could not help exclaiming, " Thus it is with me — this is an emblem of my condition — whatever I had to cheer me is fled ; I am left alone — a stranger in the wide, unfeeling world. Oh ! what is life without enjoyment ? — It is, indeed, waste and dreary. I did live. The remembrance of those happy days, when Thorna was my companion ; when we wandered together in the bright sunshine, or in the hours of moonlight ; or seated ourselves by some musical rivulet ; or climbed the mountains and beheld with delight the great world spread around us ; when we conversed on the wonders of nature — the brilliant flower, the glittering insect, or the dazzling, flickering meteor ; or, of what was still dearer to us — our mutual hopes and fears ; and although the com-

unications were sometimes made with a blushing cheek and a tremulous voice, yet the blushes frequently were those of joy, and the tremulousness arose from novel and almost unnerving sensations. I remember times, in which our feelings seemed almost to be paralised by the perfect harmony of our thoughts, and the completeness of our sympathies. As I have heard Sira Gudmerson say, in one of his sermons, that two breezes meeting, and embracing each other, fall into a state of rest; and in some instances, even a dark cloud appears, and rain descends, as if the excess of joy occasioned tears. Ah! these were happy times, blissful moments; but they are gone! When will they — will they ever return?" He wept; and having exhausted the burden of his grief, fell asleep. Then he fancied that he beheld Thorna, elegantly dressed and very beautiful; indeed he had never before seen her so fair; she approached him, smiled, and said, "My dear Marfrede! we meet to part no more!" He was in an ecstacy. "My —— my ——," he exclaimed, but words failed him; he sprang up, and threw himself at her feet.

He awoke, and found himself on the floor, in his cold, dark chamber !

Sick at heart, he laid himself on the bed, and again sank into slumber, when he beheld the village of Sida, on — as it appeared to him — a Sabbath-day. Every thing was peaceful, the sky was cloudless, the air calm, the rays of the sun warm and cheering, the meadows bright and sparkling as if strewed with emeralds, and the snowy summits of the distant mountains tinged with gold. He saw also the interior of Gudbrand Magnusson's house, in which was Thorna, with the rest of the family. The maiden was decked in a bridal dress ; her head was encircled with the silver bridal crown ; she was about to be married ; and — the consciousness of it was almost overwhelming — Marfrede was to be the bridegroom ! All were happy ; Thorna was more than usually lovely ; her smiles were more than usually fascinating ; her voice was more than usually musical : Marfrede was full of life and joy. Many friends assembled ; and all set off for Sida church. The service was begun ; the minister descended from the pulpit ;

and the party gathered around the altar. How it was, he knew not, but although conscious of being present, Marfrede fancied himself invisible. In a few moments, a tall and comely youth entered the church, and, while every eye was fixed on him, he approached the altar — welcomed by the smiles and blushes of Thorna — when the clergyman took his hand and joined it with that of the lovely maiden ! Marfrede screamed, and now, regaining his visibility, rushed from the centre of the church, and flinging himself between the stranger and the maiden, awoke in a state of dreadful agitation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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CHAPTER XXI.

IN Sida, it was not unnatural that the dark nights of winter should have affected the imaginations of the people; indeed recent circumstances had afforded abundant materials for exciting the timid; hence their evening conversations related to mysterious and astonishing appearances. Some declared that they had seen the murdered Lara arise from the grave, and ascend into the air, and float on the wings of night, and then sink like a wounded bird to the earth. Some had seen her, they said, sitting on the grave, or smoothing the turf on its surface, and all the while singing

mournful ditties, or uttering half-expressed lamentations. Others asserted that Ion Sterninderson was seen one night, looking through the window into the badstofa on his wife and children; and was heard to say something about the bliss of a future life, the love that he bore to his family, and his ardent wishes that they would leave their earthly dwelling and bear him company to the skies. Once he was seen to float near a group of persons on a dark night, and the words "Farewell, world of woe! world of woe!" were heard. Cries also were said to be sometimes distinguished in the winter's storm, and predictions of great calamities, relating to the Sida people, were borne on the angry winds.

Feelings of timidity were become so prevalent, that Sira Gudmerson deemed it his duty to preach a sermon for the purpose of tranquillising the public mind. His text was, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble;" when he endeavoured to convince his hearers, that Divine Providence regulates the affairs of earth, and orders all

this agreeably with the interest of those who put their trust in him. This discourse, which was faithful and consolatory, tended to lull, but not to eradicate, the fears of the audience.

It is natural that the general excitation should have affected a mind like that of Vola. One evening there was a small party at Gudbrand's house, (but Galmina and Thord were not present,) and the visitors had been entertained by the performance of Thorna on the lang-spiel—an instrument which she, as well as her sister, played skilfully—and also by the recitations of Vola from the *Sagas*, relating to periods of early Icelandic history; and a short pause having succeeded, Vola said, “Now, if you please, I will tell you what I saw last night. I dreamt I was at sea in a fishing boat holding a line, when, all at once, something seized the line, which drew it down, and the boat followed, and the dark waters closed upon me. I descended until I came to an open place, which consisted of a spacious apartment, over which a beautiful dome of water was spread, illumined by strains of various co-

loured light. The ground was covered with all kinds of precious stones, which were lit up in a thousand brilliant hues, by the reflected light from the dome. Then several creatures, something like men, but green and covered with scales, started up and danced around me. One of them played delightfully on an instrument, such as I had never before seen. In a short time music burst forth on every hand, which was exceedingly delightful, so that I was bewildered and enchanted, when, all at once, the dome was broken through, and down came before me the body of Lara Thordalston. As it struck the ground, the music ceased, and there was a deathlike pause. I was much shocked, and my blood began to curdle in my veins, while the hair of my head became stiff and bristly. In a short time the green men came around her, dancing and singing some singular tune; then they took out her eyes and put pearls in the sockets; they cut the cord from her neck, and put a ring of gold in the place of it; they plucked off her hair, and decked her head with flowers; they exchanged

her dress for an elegant robe which, at every movement, exhibited a variety of delicate tints. Then she was endowed with life; she arose, and, as she stood, was suddenly transformed, being furnished with beautiful eyes—lighted up with a glow of more than earthly expression—and flowing, glossy hair—which at the same time received a grace from, and imparted a grace to her lovely countenance. She now approached me, and taking my hand, led me through long passages in the waters, some of which were dark, and others of dazzling brightness; some were arched like the roofs of temples, such as I have seen in pictures; while others were bounded by smooth, glassy waters—within which, I could sometimes perceive, apparently pretty far in, a stream of gold or silver lustre, as some shining fish darted along. After we had proceeded for a considerable distance, Lara stopped, and turning towards me looked full in my face. I was about to speak, though much afraid, but she held up her finger and enjoined silence. In a moment, we

were raised through the dark waters, and brought to the surface among scenes which I had never imagined to exist even in the enchanted regions of Odin — for all was bright and indescribably lovely. The surface of the sea was glistening and sparkling, and reflecting all manner of lovely forms and colours, while here and there, an island was seen clothed with groves, which were enamelled with bright, untainted blossoms, and encircled with balmy fragrance. I never beheld such brilliant tints as those which decked the scene. I heard bursts of the sweetest music, such as might lull the soul to repose, and yet not allow it to sink into unconsciousness, but keep it hovering as it were between the real and imaginary worlds of beauty, and preserve it in a state of mysterious delight. Nothing, nothing could be heard but harmony ; nothing seen but sparkling, silvery waters, and painted islands, and the deep, blue vault of heaven.

“ Lara conducted me to a lovely spot, where we seated ourselves beneath a cluster of trees, among sweet flowers, and near a musical ri-

vulet, which, as I fancied, warbled a plaintive and pleasing tune. At a short distance, a stream of light burst on our view, which seemed to extend itself almost to infinity; and then a splendid chariot appeared on it, such a one as that in which the prophet of Gilead ascended to Heaven. While we sat and admired it, a spirit, light as air and beautiful as a seraph, came to us; and leading Lara and myself to the chariot, he handed us into it, and then, seizing the reins, drove the four beautiful horses up the roadway of light. We seemed to travel through the whole extent of the Heavens. In one part we beheld a world covered with inhabitants; in another, a world of clear, shining waters; in another, a world of glowing fire; some, in the distance, seemed to be of gold, some of silver, and some of a dark blue, or crimson colour. The effect was indescribably novel and splendid. At length, we arrived on a broad roadway, which appeared to be covered with plates of gold, and in the interstices of the gold, as a bordering to every

plate, there were rows of pearls. On each side of the roadway, there were lofty columns of a beautiful substance, veined and semi-transparent, some of which resembled crystal, with spirals of gold or silver in the centre; and over them was a vast superstructure. Between the columns, spirits of light, the guards of the heavenly regions were stationed. These were very radiant, and around their forms were lines of intense lustre, so that they were in reality traced out in lines of light. The road widened as we proceeded, but we could discern little because of the brilliancy; at length we came on such scenes as I cannot describe; indeed it would not be lawful to describe them; for a voice said, in an unearthly tone, and as it spoke the sounds were echoed from the inner space, ‘Look! feast your eyes on heavenly things; but the visions hereof ye shall not declare.’ Then a spirit came, and took Lara from the chariot; I wished to accompany her, but he said, ‘Return to earth; repent—make your peace with the Great Being; then shall you be admitted to these blissful scenes.’ I was

handed out of the chariot; and when I expected to touch the ground, I found no resting-place for my feet—I sunk, sunk, sunk, until the fright awoke me."

"That," said Gudbrand, after a pause, "is a singular dream. There is something very mysterious in our sleeping hours. Perhaps some good angel, in this instance, communicated the thoughts to Vola, that they might comfort our young friends in regard to the destiny of their sister. The realms of Paradise, how bright and beautiful! A dwelling in those mansions, eternal in the heavens, how delightful! Man was not made for earth alone—his destiny is higher; the pilgrimage through mortal life is only as the painful ascent to some magnificent temple—the home, the everlasting home of man—where, free from the shadows and gloom of life, he will dwell in unspeakable joy for ever!"

"There is something animating and ennobling," said Groffner Hofdigmund (one of the visitors at Gudbrand's house) "in the con-

temptation of spiritual existence. It is a subject on which I like to reflect; and I hope it will be my lot, not only to live in imagination occasionally, with those who dwell above the stars, but to live with them in reality."

" Ah ! " exclaimed Gudbrand, involuntarily lifting his hands, and evincing by his countenance the powerful feelings of his mind, " when life is swallowed up in death, and death in immortality, and immortality is surrounded by, and hid in the effulgence of heavenly glory— O ! what a blissful event will that be ! "

" The realms of the blessed," said Groffner, " without doubt, are inhabited by countless millions of beings, who possess forms resembling those of men, but more perfect—the extreme of beauty; and perhaps, as you have intimated, some of them visit earth; and in our waking as well as sleeping hours, are present though unseen. Some probably are in this place, and listening to our conversation. How simple and ignorant we must frequently appear in the view of spiritual beings ! "

" I have often thought," observed Vola, (who

was, just now, free from her usual levity), "that in the eye of the Almighty we must seem very foolish, and sometimes very wicked; for when we think of him and our duty, we endeavour, too frequently, to set both aside, that we may follow the bent of our will: indeed when we determine on acting correctly, our motives are not always good; but the Deity is present; he knows the whole—he watches every movement, he hears what we say—even if we speak to ourselves; and surely we must sometimes appear very sinful and ignorant."

"I am really gratified, my dear," replied Gudbrand, "to hear you speak thus reasonably. We all feel something of what you have described;—that is, we are disposed to do evil and to persuade ourselves that it is good; we endeavour to put darkness for light—so strong is our disposition to go astray: but we forget that God watches us. Your reflections, my dear, if carried to their natural result, would make us more careful, and more consistent in our conduct. We should consider that not only

good and perhaps evil beings are continually around us, but the eye of God — invisible to mortal eye — is always fixed upon us. I pray that we may be enabled to remember this, and to act agreeably with it!"

"Yes," said Groffner; "the eye of Deity is always resting on us; we admit this in theory, but deny it in practice. There is little doubt, I think, that created spiritual beings also are about our paths; men frequently deny this, but their conduct shews that they believe it. In what respect evil spirits may be allowed to molest us I know not; but that good ones are allowed to preserve us, on particular occasions, I am fully convinced.* I have known many instances in which, without doubt, the arm of Divine benevolence, in the person of a guardian angel, has saved men from danger. In some instances, the benevolent spirit was invisible;

* The Icelanders formerly were firm believers in *particular* providence, and the interference of spiritual agents with worldly affairs. In some instances, they carried their opinions too far; but this, perhaps, was the more natural side to err, and especially in a country where poetry was more influential than physics.

in others, he was distinctly seen. My grandfather was a sincere man, and a good Christian ; he put his trust in him from whom help cometh, and he was not forsaken in time of need. He lived near Breidavik. One night, when he was travelling, it became very dark, and he lost his way. Nothing seemed to surround him but darkness, vacant as he supposed, but it was tenanted with bliss, beauty, and benevolence—for there were guardian spirits in it. The traveller was on horseback, and at first rode over plains, then among rocks, and the road being uneven, the horse slipt and nearly fell into a gulley. This induced him to alight, and he walked onward leading his horse. At first he was timid, but he put his trust in God who, he knew, was present in darkness as well as in daylight, and went on singing psalms, or repeating passages from the Bible and Vidalin's Sermons. Still proceeding, without perceiving or thinking of danger, he came to the brink of a tremendous precipice ; and, without doubt, would have gone over—for he was walking before the horse—but at that very moment a

bright light shone about him, and he perceived the brink of the gulf, with the awful void beneath. The horse stopped immediately, and stood trembling. The old man fell on his knees, and thanked his Heavenly Father for preserving him. Within a minute or two, a bright and beautiful spirit, floating in the air, came out from the midst of the light ; and raising my grandfather from the ground, led him along many windings, amidst dangerous precipices, and brought him out on a plain. Then the heavenly conductor said, ‘ Behold that distant, twinkling light ; direct thy course to that, and thou wilt be safe.’ Having said this, he vanished.

“ What affected my grandfather very much, and filled him with surprise, was a little incident which is said to have happened while he was under supernatural guidance. The spirit had grasped his hand, and was leading him on, when my grandfather put over his left hand in order to touch the semitransparent robe that floated down his back ; but he discovered, to his amazement, that his hand found no kind of

resistance. He then put his hand to the back of the celestial being (for it is said he was completely free from fear), and when, if the form had been substantial, his fingers would have been stopped in their progress, there was not the least resistance; and yet he felt that the hand of the spirit grasped his wrist, and led him on."

"As to the wonderful peculiarities of spirits," observed Gudbrand, "I can offer no opinion; for I am not qualified for it; but I fully believe in the existence and operation of miraculous power."

"Father!" said Thorna, "there is the large book over there, which was left by Sira Gudmerson. I was looking at it, and I saw something about miracles and angels, but I don't know exactly what it is, for I am sorry to say I know little of Latin."

"Hand it over, my dear," said Gudbrand; "but I cannot help you much. However, our friend Groffner* will be able to do so. I could

* Groffner, like many of the more respectable Icelanders — some of whom were intended for the church,

read Latin pretty well at one time," he continued, addressing his visitors, "but I have done very little to it lately. I look sometimes into two or three books which were given me by Sira Biarne, just before his death; but I do it rather from affection to my departed friend than from any other motive. I can still contrive, however, to glean a little from some parts of Daniel Hein-sius's commentary."

"That is an excellent work," observed Groff-ner.

"Here, my dear, bring the book here," said Gudbrand to his daughter, who was toiling along with Sira Gudmerson's folio.

"It is very heavy, father," said Thorna, as she put it on the table.

Gudbrand pushed it over to Groffner.

"Ah!" said he, "I have seen this work before:

and others for different engagements — was educated at the University of Copenhagen. Gudbrand himself was there for about two years. Of the students from Iceland, it has been remarked, that they were "distinguished as well for the regularity of their manners, as for the intensity of their application." *Edinburgh Review*, vol. ii. p. 305.

it is the *Opera Theologica* of the celebrated Simon Episcopius of Leyden — the same city that gave birth to Heinsius; it has been for many generations a celebrated seat of learning."

Thorna found the chapter which she had been looking at, entitled *De Angelorum natura, officio, et statu*; and Groffner, on reading it, found many opinions which were confirmatory of what had been expressed by himself and Gudbrand. The chapter is long, and therefore cannot be transcribed: after which, he read some paragraphs on Divine Providence and miracles.

"It has often appeared to me," observed Gudbrand — "as that writer observes — that the providence of God is to be looked for in his ordinary rather than extraordinary works. It is probable that miracles would be confined to the more unenlightened and desolate parts of the earth. In the time of our blessed Saviour, for instance, the inhabitants of the East were ignorant of spiritual things, and miracles only could illumine them, and show them the truths of Christianity. In desolate places, there is no help from man — the Deity alone is the helper

of the distressed. But it is very different in society, which was established by God, in order that men might assist each other in intellectual, moral, religious, and worldly matters. The Deity works by means, when means are present; but he works without them, and even in opposition to the ordinary course of things when means are absent. I have no doubt that the narrative you gave just now is, in substance, correct. Shall a good man be inspired of God to put his trust in him, and yet be deceived as to the impressions which immediately follow? Certainly not. I have heard of some instances, in which I am sure the mercy of God has turned the ordinary course of affairs, in order to favour his creatures. Two or three present themselves to my remembrance, but I will mention only one, one in which we feel some interest.

“The young lady, Galmina Thordalston, and her brother,” continued Gudbrand, addressing himself more particularly to his visitors, “were favoured in this respect in their early days. The amiable and interesting girl related the particulars to us, a short time since, a few of

which I will now repeat. The mother of these children was married when she was about twenty years of age, to a man who pretended to be amiable, affectionate, and honourable: but she found him to be wicked, cruel, and unnatural. Thord and Galmina were twins; Lara was born about twelve months after; thus there were three children within two years of the marriage. The family was now, owing to the idleness and extravagance of the husband, reduced to great distress, so that the wife and children were preserved from starving only by the benevolence of neighbours. If the poor woman remonstrated with her husband, he flew into a violent rage, and threatened to kill her; — for ‘bad men,’ as I have heard our clergyman observe, ‘use anger as a shield, and threaten corporal injury as a check to the expression of moral truth.’ On one occasion, a neighbour, who accidentally met him, endeavoured to reason with him on the impropriety of his conduct; but he became furious, and struck his adviser a violent blow, which laid him on the ground as dead. The assailant, supposing he had killed the man, fled;

and it is believed that on the following night he fell over a precipice, for his hat was found near the brink of it, and at the bottom was seen something like a dead body; but no one could go down into such a deep and dangerous place, in order to remove the corpse.

“It is painful for a wife to lose a husband, or a husband a wife, if they have lived happily together; indeed it is a heartbreaking, an agonising separation; but we must,” he continued, wiping away the tears which started in his eyes, “we must endure these trials. However, in the case of this poor creature, the loss of her husband was the gain of her peace. When cruelty, instead of love, reigns in the bower of matrimony, the dissolution of the union — for it is no union of hearts but only of names — is not distressing. Marriage, without an interchange of affection, produces fear and hatred; but with an interchange of affection, it establishes a firm, a never-failing bond of union. An interchange of harshness, contradiction, and cruelty, produces a desire of separation; or the existence of it on one side, and passiveness on the other, excites

disgust — not the less abiding because unexpressed. A widow clothes herself in decent mourning when, not her helpmate but her tyrant dies. She sheds, perhaps, some tears; for the contemplation of death is melancholy, and the departure of one — who ought to have been, but was not, a faithful husband — gone with all his sins to judgment, would naturally agitate the mind. In such a case, however, there is no sincere regard for the deceased — no wish that, if Providence would grant it, the husband might return, unless to give him space for repentance. If some part of the married life were peaceful and happy, the mind perhaps would refer to it, and dwell on it, and forgetting the less pleasing parts, regret the loss of the husband. But Galchina's mother had received nothing but harshness and cruelty from her partner in life; she had therefore, on her own account, no cause of regret at his departure.

“A merciful Providence pitied the helpless condition of the widow and her three little ones; for a distant relation, on his death-bed, was induced to give them his property, consist-

ing of three farms, which enabled the widow to maintain and educate her children. When she died, about six years since, the care of the property descended on a brother, who managed it for the benefit of the orphans.

“ Nothing, however, so far, would prove the immediate interference of Divine Providence; but there is a point at which it becomes visible. The relative, who left the property, was an old man, and had been declining for some time. He had no family, and no very near connections. One morning, he said to the clergyman of the parish who visited him, and ministered the consolations of religion to his fainting spirit, ‘ I have had a dream which has produced a powerful impression on my mind. A widow with three babes came before me and cried piteously, saying, ‘ Behold my distress! I am famishing, and so are my little ones! Give me of thy abundance, that I perish not! ’ I know the face, it is that of Dysan Thordalston, of Eydal.’

“ The clergyman wrote to his brother-minister in that place, making inquiries re-

specting Dysan Thordalston ; and found that she was in the condition described in the dream. When the dying man heard it, he said, ‘ This truly is from God ; and I rejoice that he has given me something to do before I die.’ He gave instructions for transferring his property to widow Thordalston.

“ Without doubt, this arose from the immediate inspiration of the Deity, which influenced the dying man, and made him the almoner of Providence. But if the family had been alone — if, for instance, secluded in a desert, or on a mountain — he would perhaps have sent an angel to them, as he did to the three Israelites on the plains of Dura ; or ravens, as he did to Elijah ; or have showered down blessings from the stores of Heaven, as he did on the wanderers in the wilderness. But I believe that Divine Providence would not have favoured her, if she had not put her trust in him.”

Some further conversation arose respecting the interference of the Deity and the appearance of spiritual beings, during which Thorna,

as well as one of the visitors who has not previously been mentioned, made some sensible and pleasing remarks; but our limits will not allow us to relate more of this evening's engagement. After spending several hours, very delightfully, the party broke up.

CHAP. XXII.

LET us look through the vista of a few months, or rather, let us walk through it, and contemplate what exists at its termination. Our starting place is the winter; the end of our route is the summer; we leave in January and arrive in May. Now, being come, we perceive that great preparations are making in Gudbrand's family for an important event—the marriage of Thorna and Thord. "Merciful Heaven!" a person would exclaim, who possessed the least reflection or feeling, "do avert this unnatural, this unhappy union!" But the purposes of Providence are not always to be unravelled. Not a word had been heard of, or from Marfrede; and Thord was sick at heart—for hope deferred produces this effect.

It would not be improper to look around, or perhaps to call over a muster-roll of those who have been occasionally introduced to our notice,

that we may know where and how they are. Gudbrand and his spouse were in good health. Eggert also was well. Galmina was completely recovered from the effects of her sufferings. Her regard for Eggert had dwindled into esteem; for the exciting influences, which had engendered something like love, had vanished, and the premature plant had drooped and perished. Vola was not as erratic as formerly; she was quite as cheerful, but more reasonable. Thord was rejoicing in the anticipation of his union with the beloved Sida maiden—the sweetest flower in that garden of Iceland. Waldi Freyde had not been heard of since he escaped from prison. The robber-woman had arrived in Denmark, and her sentence had been confirmed by the king.

Great preparations, it has been said, were making for the wedding. Summer was come—rosy and smiling—all nature was cheerful. The birds sung sweetly among the newly-clad bushes; the blossoms unfolded their loveliest tints to welcome the sun's rays; the countenances of young men and maidens beamed

with joy ; but there was darkness — there was gloom in Thorna's soul — a dark spot in the midst of light and joyousness. It is true that the happiness which beamed around reflected some of its rays on Thorna ; but it was a mere reflection — a little external glitter — the soul of the hapless maiden was neither illumined nor warmed.

The day was fixed: the deed, the irrevocable deed was to be sealed ; Marfrede was to be rejected for ever ; Thord to be received as a bosom-friend ! What would Thorna feel, as the wife of Thord, if ever, by some unforeseen event, she should come into the presence of her former lover ? Was Marfrede dead ? Was his spirit then hovering over the scenes which Sida was exhibiting ? What would he think of them ? Reflections of this sort agitated and tortured the maiden's mind. However, she had been neglected — shamefully neglected ; for twelve months she had not heard from Copenhagen — she had not heard from Marfrede at all — or at least, had not heard what she had expected, that he was honourable and

faithful; but she had received communication on communication, proof on proof, relating to his dishonour — evidence which she could not reasonably reject — evidence both positive and negative, one singularly confirming and strengthening the other — evidence relating to his dissipated conduct and impiety. She was determined therefore to separate herself for ever from him who had acted thus cruelly and faithlessly. Was she premature, was she impatient in so doing? An action must be estimated by the circumstances which precede or accompany it. There was no indifference in Thorna's mind — she was not careless whether Marfrede would esteem or neglect her. No, her soul was bound up in his; and when he apparently withdrew himself, she was left in darkness and hopelessness. She was affected in the same degree as her love was powerful — She was maddened (yes, even Thorna was) into an act of desperation. Sometimes, when human beings are almost overwhelmed with misery, they plunge themselves into the shadowy depths of eternity; and thus, when

Thorna — although possessing a vigorous mind — was overcome with grief and disappointment, she plunged herself into an engagement which would separate her for ever from the object of her love.

Such conduct, at first sight, appears unnatural ; and yet perhaps it is natural. The best persons feel something like revenge ; indeed the highest attainment of the moral nature is to overcome this feeling, and at the same time, to be grateful for favours ; but as opposite influences produce opposite effects, it is no easy task to acquire this disposition. It is, however, natural and common to indulge feelings of retaliation ; and thus, when a man suffers disadvantage, he looks around for the author of the wrong that he may return evil for evil : or if he fails, he brings the whole weight of condemnation on himself.— That is, he has a certain portion of spite or malice to be expended on some one ; and if no other can be found, self must receive it. Hence it is not unusual for a man to give himself opprobrious names, to castigate himself or tear his hair ;

and this he will do when self is not at all blameable; and he will do it sometimes for the purpose of showing the amount of the wrong in the amount of his grief; and thus, by a side wind, of disordering and paining the mind of the aggressor. It will not be supposed that Thorna acted solely from this motive, but without doubt it had some influence on her; (and we do not wish to make her, or any who is introduced to the reader, a model of perfection, but a model of nature's forming, possessing shadows as well as lights:) for Thorna, in common with her species, was liable to anxiety and irritation, not in degree but in kind; and as her case was extremely peculiar, her feelings were proportionably excited. Besides, woman is more powerfully influenced by moral sensibility than man; she is more susceptible of gratitude, and perhaps also of aversion. Thorna was displeased with Marfrede, and sometimes with herself for taking notice of his conduct; and yet, how could she do otherwise? It seemed to her a matter of consistency and duty, leaving out other con-

siderations, to take serious notice of it: thus she was kept in a state of great excitement—of continual combat between her wrongs and her maidenly dignity—until, at length, being dispirited and almost desperate, she determined on finishing the whole by sealing her fate.

Thord had made a visit to the north, for the purpose of preparing a house for his and Thorna's residence. Galmina intended to return with the married couple; and the wedding was appointed for the following Sunday. It was now the beginning of June—three days more, and the matter would be unalterably fixed. The family of Gudbrand, generally, were favorable to the match, and the good old man acquiesced in it. On the *ſimtudagr* (or Thursday), in the forenoon, Gunlög was walking across the sitting-room, in which there were several of the household, when she stopped suddenly, exclaiming “Bless me! I thought I should have fallen; my head was all in a whirl.”

“I felt the same,” said one.

“So did I,” said another.

Indeed, all felt it ; but what occasioned it, no one knew. Gunlög was now sitting down. “ There ! there !” she said, “ I felt it again ;” and then, bursting into tears, she exclaimed, “ May God have mercy on us ! This is like what I felt in 1753, at the coming on of the great earthquake !”

Good old Gudbrand now came in, very pale, and much agitated. “ My dear children !” he exclaimed, in scarcely articulate words ; and looking around with paternal anxiety, (his feelings at that moment must have been harrowing), sat down and wept. All now were in tears, and it was a moving sight. The judgments of God were in the land, the earth was trembling, and it might, at the next moment, swallow them up. Thorna, apparently influenced by a sudden thought (perhaps, that now, and only now was the opportunity for a last embrace), arose, and clasped her father around the neck, and bowed her head on his, and sobbed aloud. “ Oh, my dear father !” she exclaimed ; but could say no more. One and another gathered

around the old man, and wept, and uttered lamentations. A sudden and dreadful shock now startled them. "Oh ! oh !" they cried, as the ground shook beneath them ; and parting from each other's embrace, perhaps for the last time, staggered to the sides of the room. It was a horrid, a sickening sensation. The furniture on the walls was shaking, and no one could keep himself firm on his legs. At this moment Eggert forced open the door, and all rushed out of the house. People were hurrying hither and thither, while the air, at times, was rent with awful shrieks. Some ran in this direction, and some in that, not knowing whither to go ; while others ran to and fro, without a settled purpose, or indeed without knowing what they did. "Oh, my dear father !" or "Oh, my dear mother !" was the agonised cry of a son or daughter, as he or she led along a feeble and trembling parent. "Oh, my precious babe !" cried a mother, as she rushed wildly by, and in agony pressed the infant to her breast. "Oh, my God !" cried a man in a state of de-

lirium, while his ghastly, fear-stricken face was lifted to heaven, and the ground shook beneath him, “ Oh ! oh ! — God ! God have mercy on me ! ” Nothing scarcely was seen but despair and madness ; nothing was heard but shrieks and lamentations.

The tremulous motion of the earth, with the consequent terror, abated a little, and then every one endeavoured to remove what was valuable from the houses, and to erect tents in the meadows which lay towards the sea. After a part of the furniture was removed, the quaking of the earth lessened considerably, and it was thought better to carry the whole to its original place ; but while they were engaged in so doing, the shocks became violent, and all again fled to the meadows. For four or five days, the poor people of Sida were kept in a state of dreadful uncertainty by the subsiding and returning of the earthquake ; during which period, they were sometimes in their dwellings, and sometimes in the meadows ; at last, the shocks became so frequent and severe, that it was deemed necessary for the preservation of their lives to take

up their abode in the meadows. During the period of preparation — the fixing of the tents, &c. — the minds of the people were withdrawn, in some degree, from melancholy reflections; but now, when the labor was ended, they were again filled with distress. The agitation of the elements was so much increased, that the first night spent in the meadows was dreadful; during that period, no one ate, drank, or slept; every other feeling was overcome by terror; for, in addition to the sickening motion of the earth, there was the continual flashing of lightning and the rolling of thunder. In the morning, a vast and dense cloud of ashes was seen rising from the yökul or volcanic mountain, which lay towards the north; providentially, a strong wind from the sea kept back the destructive cloud, or the parish of Sida would have been covered with brimstone, and pumice, and ashes. The sun shone not out, owing to the heavy cloud which hung over the land, and day was as twilight, except that there was occasionally a flickering produced by the mountain-flames. The condition of the Sida people was dreadful; danger

and death stared them in the face, and they knew not what to do, or where to go. The meadows were strewed with tents and furniture: in one place, a little dwelling was constructed with a few poles, over which cloaks, coats, and bedding were spread; in another, a door, or two or three planks, elevated a little from the ground, formed the only shelter for several persons. Gudbrand's tent was commodious in comparison with some, but it was a miserable place; for the furniture was deposited on the wet ground, and the family were obliged to take up their residence on the piles of household goods. The covering of the habitation was of wadmal.

About the middle of the day, the agitation of the earth abated, and many persons went to seek for the cattle, which were principally behind the northerly hills. Several horses, instinctively dreading the approaching danger, had galloped into the village; but the sheep and cows, or the greater part of them, with the remainder of the horses, were found, not in the usual pasturage, but in a deep valley. They

were much terrified, and it was only with difficulty that they were driven away. Once or twice, during the expedition, the party felt, owing to a variation of the wind, a slight sprinkling of burning ashes. Afterwards, while driving the cattle on the plains, one of the men looked back, and exclaimed, in great terror, “The cloud—the cloud is coming!” They ran, but it soon overtook them, and hot dust with stones fell on all sides. The sheep were least affected; but the cows were sadly burnt, and some of the horses became frantic—they plunged, and snorted, and galloped about, to the imminent danger of the Sida people. Two or three, in order to remove the hot ashes from their backs, rolled on the ground; but they shrieked with pain, and soon sprang up in a worse plight than before. Fortunately, one of them discovered at a great distance a small river, and galloped towards it, followed by the rest; and in a short time scores of horses and cows were cooling themselves in the grateful waters: but here a great disorder began, and the men had much difficulty to drive them away.

When the party were about two miles from Sida, there was another sprinkling of hot ashes, at which the cattle were much terrified, and setting off, ran as fast as they could until they entered the township, when they made the best of their way to their accustomed places, but were afterwards brought down to the meadows.

“If the eruption should continue,” inquired one and another, “what shall we do for food?” This was a natural question, and connected with painful reflections; for although there were many cows and sheep, these would not last long, and besides there was but little hay for the cattle, and very little grass.

What a vast and afflicting change had come on Gudbrand’s family in the course of a few days! Joy and delightful prospects seemed to have been the portion of all — Thorna only excepted; now the whole was destroyed, and the mind was painfully engaged with the present and future. Misery stalked about among the tents, and took up her abode there, while some dreadful catastrophe seemed to be approaching, which would involve all in destruction.

Thord had expected to be a happy bridegroom ; now he would probably be wedded to death ; and the grave, in some forgotten spot, would be his dwelling-place. Thorna was sometimes calm in the midst of danger, for she scarcely dreaded to be removed from the troubles of life, especially as she hoped that, through the mercy of her Saviour, she should be admitted to the joys of heaven ; but when she looked on her dear mother bowed down with infirmity, and her beloved father affected by increase of years, driven from home, and exposed, when human nature can least bear it, to danger and privation, she was deeply wounded — she felt most acutely ; and determined to endeavor to live that she might preserve them from death. Besides, a thought of this kind affected Thorna's mind, "If," said she, "I were to die, my spirit, for some time at least, might frequent the long-accustomed scenes of earth ; and if feelings of grief were possessed then, how should I grieve to see my dear parents in misery ! Ah, perhaps then I should be capable of looking into the recesses of their hearts,

and perceiving the bitterness of their sorrow, and that sorrow partly for me ! I might perhaps be preserved from distressing feelings, but I cannot bear to think of it." Vola's spirits seemed to be almost broken down — she was silent and melancholy.

Several days were spent by the Sida people in a miserable condition ; sometimes they hoped, and sometimes they feared, or even despaired ; sometimes the heavens were light at midnight, and sometimes dark at noon-day. When hope sprang up, they exerted themselves a little ; at other times they sat in pallid apathy, or wept and lamented their condition. In the midst of all, however, the minds of these poor people were generally directed to Heaven ; for all believed that it was God who held the elements in his hand — who controled, or gave freedom to subterranean fires ; who suffered the earth to be shaken ; who opened abroad the lightnings, and caused the thunders to roll round the heavens ; they prayed therefore to him, and frequently found that, in respect of living or dying, they could trust in him. When

the wheels of human experience run smoothly, beneath a cheerful sky, people are liable to forget the benevolent Ruler of the earth ; and it is only, in many instances, when the roadway of life is rough and dangerous — when cheering prospects are fading from the view, and the regions of sorrow opening before them — that men are disposed to turn their attention from earth to Heaven.

The inhabitants of Iceland were at that period almost insulated from the rest of the world ; but, as it has been observed, they were intellectual, and many were sincere Christians. Those who had not previously reflected on religion and death, began now, if haply they might, to make their peace with God ; and he whose ear is open to the softest sigh — who afflicts the bodies of men for the sake of their immortal spirits — who proclaimed that descending invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” — listened to their prayers ; his ear was above the cloud, the dark and awful cloud that rested on them — and he gave them consolatory

answers. It requires however, something more than human firmness to be capable of witnessing the awful convulsions of nature without experiencing timidity and even terror.

After a dreary and fearful night, one and another began to move about, and inquire if it was day. "Yes," it was answered, "it must be day;" but there was no light of the sun—there was almost total darkness. For some time the people continued in dreadful suspense, and then were startled by flashes of light. On looking towards the mountains, they beheld streams of fire darting to the heavens, on some occasions resembling pillars in which were moving masses ascending and descending. The pillars were crested with clouds of black vapour, which rolled towards the south. Sometimes the clouds descended a little, and hid the flames; at other times they were thin, and very brilliant; and at other times the clouds and pillars were swept aside, and the summit of the mountain appeared like a glowing furnace.

The wind, which had been northerly for some time, changed to the south and freshened

a little, which brought showers of hot ashes over the meadows; and as the people could badly shelter themselves, some were severely burnt. The sufferings of those who were exposed to the ashes, and their groans—which seemed to hang on the air, as if the air itself in a preternatural manner prolonged the sound—the weeping of women and children; the wringing of hands, and the exclamations of alarm even in men; the haggard countenances of those who were peeping out from their retreats, and on whom the light of the fire was flashing; the terrible blackness of the heavens towards the south, the sickening motion of the earth, and the rolling of hollow thunder; produced an effect which was truly appalling. In a short time, torrents of water, proceeding from melted ice, poured down the mountains; and one of the streams, sweeping close by Gudbrand's tent, nearly overwhelmed it. The females were obliged to climb to the highest part of the piles of household goods, while the water flowed around them, and they knew not how much it would increase. The torrent did increase, and

in order to preserve life they were obliged to remove the tent to higher ground. Thus, half buried in water and exposed to hot falling ashes, the family were obliged to labour about their property. But it may be asked, "Why did they labour at all, when death, it might almost be said, was present — when the terrible volcano was before them, and the principal light, even at noon-day, was the flashing of devouring flames?" — So some of Gudbrand's family thought. "Let us sit here and die," said the exhausted Gunlöd. "I fear the removal will be useless," said Thorna. But Gudbrand animated, just at that moment, with hope, and depending on the mercy of God, and anxious to preserve those who were dear to him, urged his family to adopt measures which alone could save them.

After a considerable time, and not until the next day, the heavens became rather light; but there was the same dizzy motion of the earth: indeed at one period, the shocks were so violent, that the tents were much shaken, and many houses in the parish were heard falling.

The clouds of ashes were become less dense, and the showers less frequent when, looking in the direction of the river, columns of steam were perceived ascending. "What can that be?" many inquired, as they gathered together and looked on it; but none could give an answer. Some went cautiously towards it, and found that a vast body of lava, red hot, moving slowly, had taken possession of the channel of the waters, and as it progressed the watery fluid was raised in steam, which fell at a short distance on each side of the river in heavy rain. The sight was novel, grand, and terrific. Divine Providence, on that occasion, kept this destructive fluid from Sida; but in the course of a few hours, the Scapter was become a river of glowing fire.

Not far from the river, there was a gulf of considerable depth, into which the lava, having diverged a little from its direct course, began to pour; and a wide, vast stream of fire, from the brink to the lowest depth, exhibited a scene which was terrifically grand. Soon the gulf became half filled, and then the surface of glowing fire was agitated like a stormy sea.

In a few hours the pit was overflowing, and the lava, after proceeding a short distance towards the west, ceased its progress.

So much anxiety and terror, with exposure to extreme heat and cold, broke down the tottering frame of Gunlöd.

“ My dear Thorna,” she said with a faltering voice — her countenance becoming more pallid as she spoke — “ make my resting-place easy ; I believe I shall not continue long.”

Thorna, startled at the dreadful communication, became deadly pale ; and while the tears were trickling down her cheeks, exclaimed, “ Oh ! my dear mother, do not say so : God, I hope, will preserve you, and — ”

The affectionate daughter however, (her eyes bedimmed with weeping,) made the couch of her dying mother — for she was dying — as easy as possible ; and then, gently placing her on it, knelt by her side, her hands and eyes being lifted to Heaven, and prayed that God would preserve the mother for the sake of the children. But Gunlöd was fast sinking. Poor old Gudbrand, when he knew what had

happened to his long-loved partner, came with a sinking heart, and threw himself on the ground by her side, (she was now incapable of speaking,) and leant over her, the tears unconsciously trickling down his cheeks, while his agonised soul watched the countenance of his beloved wife, as the last movement of her features indicated the departure of her spirit, and told him, in noiseless signs, the irreparable loss he had sustained. A sudden chill seized him, his tears ceased, and he threw himself by the side of his late partner, in speechless and almost insensible despair.

It is scarcely possible to avoid dropping a word or two of pity on this excellent but unfortunate man — deprived of his wife, driven from his home, stripped of his property, exposed to famine, in hourly dread of being, with the remainder of his beloved household, swept away in a torrent of lava, or buried in volcanic ashes, or engulfed in the earth; — he was apparently encircled with misery; but, in his own view, the last great trial was the weightiest, and this was insupportable.

Gunlög was to be interred not far from the tent, in a grave which, alas, was obliged to be dug by Eggert and Gudbrand. It was a distressing duty to excavate the earth — to form an apartment for the purpose of imprisoning and keeping from them a beloved relative; but, on such an occasion, none but friends — those who were influenced by affection — would perform the last offices for the dead.

In the afternoon of the day succeeding that of Gunlög's death, the grave was completed. The weather was now tranquil but gloomy, and a thin mist was spread on the earth. The body of the deceased was wrapped in wadmal and placed by the grave, near which several persons were assembled to witness the melancholy ceremony; indeed, when the clergyman arrived, almost all the people were gathered around. Many sad countenances were there — pale and emaciated; the group appeared more like tenants of the sepulchre, who had burst their cerements, and congregated on the earth, then living spectators of the burial of a friend. The mist was now

increased, and the tents, which lay at a little distance, were hid; nothing was visible but the grave, and the dead body lying near it, and the clergyman on the edge of the pit, and the family of Gudbrand in a melancholy cluster near the remains of their relative, and a circle of people, ten or twelve in depth, forming the boundary of the view; for, beyond this, all was mist and obscurity. The assembly seemed to be insulated from the rest of the world. — It was a gloomy, a distressful point in creation.

“ My beloved friends !” said the pastor, “ we are truly destitute and afflicted; not, I humbly hope, destitute of the kind providence of God, for he has said that his tender mercies are over all his works; but we are destitute of many comforts; we are surrounded by painful dispensations of Heaven, more painful than the imagination could have conceived: but let us, even now, put our trust in God. Look around you, there is nothing but darkness and obscurity, yet the arms of mercy are extended there. Look above you, shadows veil the sky, but beyond them are the happy courts of

Heaven. Oh ! my dear companions, are you not desirous of rising, as on eagles' wings, to those blissful realms ? Bow down before the Majesty of Heaven. — It is he that humbles himself in the dust, who is raised above the afflictions of earth. Our trials here—and they are dreadful—are processes for softening and purifying us, and making us fit for the skies. Bow down then, my suffering friends, and pray that God would prepare you for Heaven ; or if it be his sacred will, prepare the earth for your residence a little longer. This trembling," continued the clergyman, looking around, " is a warning perhaps that this is not our home—earth bids us depart. Ah ! we have many warnings. Behold, death has hemmed us in on every side, and has brought us to a small circle ; and here, he has one trophy— one victim— one body sacrificed to his shrine, as an introduction to immortal life. Our dear friend, we believe, has died in the Lord. She will rest from the cares of earth— on the bosom of angels will she rest, and pain and sorrow shall be known no more. Oh ! how

delightful is it for the eye, which has wept at the presence of misery, to be opened on sights of perpetual bliss! — for the ear, which has listened to groans and lamentations, to be charmed with heavenly strains! — for the feelings, which have been, by day and night, tortured with bodily disease, to be raised to a state of thrilling, of unspeakable ecstasy! The contemplation of these joys is a source of pleasure even in the midst of pain. But we are still in a land of sorrow — in the company of death. There is something awful in death; but not to the good man, especially when earth ceases to attract him with her wonted charms: death is then the sufferer's friend — he wounds that he may heal — he mangles the body that he may liberate the immortal soul."

Then, lifting his hands to heaven, he prayed that the benevolent Father of all, whose ear is open to the cry of his feeblest creature, would have mercy on them; and if it pleased him, spare their lives for many safe and happy days: or if it were his will to remove them hence, to

take them, with their friend, to the realms of everlasting peace.

While the clergyman proceeded with his prayer, the auditors were on their knees joining with earnestness in the petitions; and when it was concluded, the people felt a considerable degree of confidence; for although there was no reason for believing that earthly calamities had ceased, yet they were encouraged to put their trust in him, on whom they were dependant;—an act which in itself, as their worthy pastor had taught them, was a proof that God would favour them, inasmuch as he is not ignorant like man of the honour which is paid to him. Some women now threw a quantity of grass into Gunlöd's grave, and lowered the body in its wadmal covering into its resting-place. The pit was then filled, and the tottering Gudbrand with his afflicted children returned to the tent.

The evening was calm, but it was the repose of nature during the interval of convulsions; it seemed almost as if the elements had restrained themselves that the wretched, for a

short time, might have rest. In the morning, however, a gleaming of light was visible on the tents ; and when the people looked towards the mountains, they beheld, through the misty veil, streams of fire reaching to the Heavens. After a short time, this eruption ceased.

Poor Vola had been formerly, on some occasions, very joyous ; but her spirits seemed now to have forsaken her — she was become melancholy. She visited her mother's grave on the day after the funeral ; and while there fell down in a swoon, and although immediately carried into Gudbrand's tent, she did not soon recover. The Heavens now became black, and there was a heavy shower of hail, which increased until the ground was covered with hail-stones, and all were obliged to fly for shelter. Before the shower had ceased, a dense cloud like a column, was seen approaching — its edges fringed with brightness from the glowing fire behind it — and almost immediately hot ashes began to fall. The temperature was now increased so much that rain descended instead of hail, which, falling on the

ashes and hot stones, occasioned a dreadfully hissing noise and a dense vapour. Many persons were severely burnt; for in some instances, stones and dust fell through crevices into the tents; and in others, an accumulation of hot substances broke down the temporary shelter which was afforded to many wretched creatures and injured them severely. Then there were shrieks and groans, and crying out for help; but alas! none could help his neighbour; all were expecting, momentarily, to be buried — to be encompassed and covered up, bit by bit, with scorching coals and ashes.

The cattle were made almost frantic by the hot substances, the hissing noise, the bursting of thunder, and the occasional flashing of light, so that some of them rushed among the tents; indeed, a fine horse burst into Gudbrand's habitation, and fell with great force on the ground; happily, he came in contact with no one, but he had exhausted his dying energies — he moved no more.

After a short time, providentially, the wind changed, and began to blow freshly from the

south, driving back the cloud of ashes. The sky was now considerably lighter, but the ground was almost black and very hot. Nearly all vegetation was destroyed; a great quantity of cattle was dead; and several human beings, a short time after the storm was over, expired. The camp was the abode of despair and death; the hopes of the most buoyant were depressed; there was no grass for the cattle, hence the cattle must perish and all must be involved in destruction. No one felt an inclination to stir; and where the people had been during the storm, they continued until the shadows of night — which were not much deeper than those of day — gathered around them. That was an awful night; there was no hail or falling of ashes, but there was a hollow, rumbling sound, which died away occasionally to a moan, as if nature herself were in agony; and this was accompanied by a dizzy, sickening motion of the earth. At about midnight, when the heavens were very black, there was a deafening explosion — louder than that of a

bursting torrent over a precipice, or the roaring of artillery; and, immediately, towards the north, the most vivid flames were seen bursting forth and spreading abroad. Sometimes the vapours which enveloped and hid the lower part were dissipated, when a magnificent and terrific column of fire was visible. When the flames ceased for a few minutes, there was pitchy darkness, and again they burst forth with appalling vigour; thus darkness alternated with glowing light, and deathlike silence with tremendous crashing and bursting. When the morning was approaching, but not visibly dawning — for there was no increase of light — nature was sunk into awful quiescence; for there was not a sound, nor a movement, nor even a breathing of air perceptible, and blackness enveloped every thing; then spiral streams of light began to shoot through the dark abyss, followed by all kinds of vivid and fantastic forms. The effect would have been beautiful, if fear had been absent; but the scene increased, if possible, the horror of the spectators.

A short time after the fugitive illumination had ceased, the Heavens became lighter, and day began to creep on the earth. The people became a little composed; and hope, with her golden but not glittering wings, began to raise them from the depths of despair; but when they came from their retreats and looked around, a dreadful scene presented itself—the country was covered with ashes; hundreds of horses, cows, and sheep were in the pastures lifeless; many of the tents were destroyed; and several human beings were dead.

With much difficulty, some of the more influential persons were brought together by the clergyman, who seemed to be almost the only one disposed for exertion; and he perhaps stimulated himself because he knew how much depended on it; and that, as the pastor of the flock, he was bound to be “instant in season and out of season,” and to be zealous for the welfare of his distressed people. With much persuasion, and with expressions of hope and confidence, he roused his neighbours from their despondency. “Perhaps,” said he, “the dis-

pleasure of Heaven is passing away, and his mercy is now beginning to beam upon us."

In compliance with Sira Gudmerson's entreaties, some of the people began to remove their dead companions; others to repair the tents; and others to gather the ashes into heaps, that the pasturage might not be totally destroyed; but, unhappily, it was found that the greater part was burnt, and that some of the cattle from feeding on it were sick, and others dead. Providentially, about two miles towards the east, a tract of sheltered meadow-land was found, green and free from ashes, to which the remaining part of the cattle was driven. Close by, there was a fine stream of water, which, flowing from the east by a subterranean channel, was pure and wholesome. The flocks and herds found it very grateful, and from this stream water was conveyed for the people in the tents.

The day was tranquil, but the air was cold, and as the evening approached, the cold increased. Vapour was seen ascending from the plains behind the hills of Sida, which being

brought over the parish, descended in sleet and snow. The latter increased during the night, and in the morning the ground was completely white ; then the weather became milder, and some rain fell. The people, however, had been so much accustomed to changes, that they thought little of these sudden transitions. Several persons, among whom were Egger and Thord, went to the pasturage to look after the cattle. The temperature of the air began now to increase, and became hot, which excited some surprise. Then an alarm was given, and all eyes were turned to an opening amongst the northerly hills, when every one was paralysed at the sight of a vast, glowing furnace ! — It was a stream of lava, that had been moving slowly along the plain, which was much higher than the parish, and here it seemed to be pausing for a moment before it burst on devoted Sida. The front which it exhibited was, for a moment, pendulous and less vivid ; then the upper part curled over, intensely bright — a sea of fire — and rolled down towards the valley. It soon reached the village, and swept

away many houses, or ruins of houses, and moved on towards the sea, passing very near the tents of the Sida people. At first, the spectators were speechless and motionless; but as it rolled towards them they drew back, almost mechanically, and fled towards the west. The heat was so intense, that some, who were feeble, or too much terrified to fly, were struck down and destroyed by the scorching and suffocating blast.

Gudbrand, Vola, Thorna, and Galmina, succeeded in getting beyond the hills, which lay about a mile to the west, and here they were safe. Before this however, when they were ascending the hills, they turned back to look for a moment at the terrific spectacle. The stream of fire was very wide. "Thank God!" said Galmina, panting, "we are, I hope, safe; and the stream does not extend to Thord and Eggert."

When the fugitives had reached the valley, they began again to talk about their friends. There were several scores of persons now

gathered together. "When will they come?" inquired one, eagerly.

"They know not where we are," said another.

"Good God!" cried one, with a ghastly, pallid countenance, as he arose and ran back to the summit of the hill—several mechanically followed him—"Good God!" he raved again. "They are lost! They are lost! They are all lost! The stream has cut them off for ever."

And then he began, in piteous accents, to lament the loss of his two sons. His expressions of grief, however, were soon drowned in a general outcry—one for a husband, another for a brother, another for a child. There was none scarcely, who did not feel at that moment, the cruel laceration which attends the loss of a near and dear relative. The scene was heart-rending. The lava, in a broad and mighty torrent, had passed on to the sea, and it would not probably be cold and solid for a year.

The cries, the groans, the impassioned prayers to Heaven, and the distressing lament-

ations, in some measure, ceased ; but the people were again roused, and their feelings powerfully excited, when they despaired their friends on a hill about two miles distant. The vapour however, which had been swept aside for a moment, gathered thick again, and the relatives were seen no more.

The despairing people, when the day closed, returned to the valley. During the night, they were exposed to the inclemency of the weather. They were cold, and wet, and thirsty, and their souls fainted within them. Many breathed out their lives upon the cold turf, amongst whom were numbered poor Galmina and Vola.

CHAP. XXIII.

ON the following morning, the comparatively few survivors hurried away from the valley of death, and proceeded without any fixed destination towards the west. Through the mercy of God, they came to a farm, about two or three miles distant, which was not materially injured by the falling ashes, or forsaken by its inhabitants; and here the famishing and worn-out fugitives were kindly received; some of them were accommodated in the house, and some in the buildings adjoining. Within a few days, two or three died, but the greater part recovered. As, however, health revisited the pallid cheek and feeble frame, the mind became more susceptible of painful feelings. It sometimes happens that long affliction breaks down the mental powers, and makes them incapable of experiencing comfort and joy; so that as one trouble passes away another is seized, as it were,

with avidity, and the mind tortures itself with that. From bodily pain, the attention of these unfortunate persons was transferred to the gloomy prospect which surrounded them: if they looked backward, they perceived nothing but distress; if forward, nothing but darkness. The good Providence however, who had kindly interfered, enabled them after a short time to become more tranquil.

Gudbrand had a friend living at Loftafell, near Mirar, between the latter place and the sea. When Thorna was recovered, her father, with the clergyman and the maiden, determined on setting out for that place. The convulsions in the mountains were not yet ceased; the flames were sometimes extremely vivid, and the eruptions awful; hence by going further west they would probably go further from danger.

Thorna and her father were desirous of returning to the valley, in which they had left the lifeless bodies of their beloved Vola and Galmina. The clergyman however strenuously opposed it; and said there would be no possibility of burying the corpses, while the attempt of going

back might be attended with loss of life. The sorrowing relatives therefore, with heavy hearts, set off with the clergyman for Loftafell.

Once or twice, the travellers had a sprinkling of ashes. The heavens towards the east were very dark, indicating the falling of a considerable quantity of volcanic substances; and they began to be uneasy about those who had been left at the farm.

Gudbrand and his party had a weary and dangerous journey. The distance was nearly fifty miles, and they were engaged in it several days. Sira Gudmerson was acquainted with some of the farmers* on the route, and by this means procured for himself and companions not only food and a resting-place, but horses to help them on. Wherever they came, they found the inhabitants in considerable alarm; for there

* The clergy themselves, in most cases, are small farmers; indeed, few besides small farmers are to be found in Iceland. Sometimes the party slept in a dwelling, and sometimes in a church, when one happened to be near their route. The churches in Iceland are to a stranger, in some respects, what the caravansaries are to a traveller in the East.

had been a slight sprinkling of ashes; and it was feared that a change of wind would cause the land to be covered with hot substances, and thus the grass and cattle would be destroyed.

The last night before the travellers arrived at Loftafell, was spent at a farm about five miles distant; from whence flashes of light, proceeding from the mountains, could be distinctly seen. The remembrance of what Gudbrand and his companions had suffered depressed their spirits, but they were grateful to Divine Providence for having so far preserved them. Poor Thorna was exceedingly changed. The brightness and joyousness which had beamed in her countenance, were fled — she was become pale and dispirited. Good old Gudbrand also was much disordered by the privations which he had suffered.

Three horses were kindly furnished by their host, and the travellers set off in company with a lad to Loftafell, where Gudbrand's friend possessed a considerable farm. When they arrived on the brow of the hill, they looked down and beheld bright meadows, watered by many

streams, the margin of which, here and there, was adorned with clusters of pretty shrubs or wild flowers. They beheld also a flock of sheep, and many cows. The sight of so much verdure and cattle, with the general appearance of tranquillity and prosperity, gladdened the heart of the travellers. They perceived also, as they descended the hill, two or three gardens and a small orchard. The latter was then a rarity in Iceland, and in the present day is equally rare. After tracking a winding road, or rather steep, they came to Olaf Bendelmier's farm, and entered the court which fronted the dwelling. At first, a domestic came out, and then ran back to tell her master that strangers were arrived. Gudbrand dismounted, and Olaf came towards him, but could not recognise him.

“We are homeless and houseless,” said Gudbrand, “distressed and fatigued. Perhaps you do not recollect us, for we are not in appearance what we were.”

“I cannot,” said Olaf, “just at this moment recollect you; but, whoever you are, come

in. Thank God ! I have a home for the homeless."

Tears glistened in Gudbrand's eyes, as his ears were greeted with this friendly welcome. The travellers dismounted, and entered the house, but did not immediately declare themselves. They were warmly greeted by Malvina, the wife of Olaf, a pleasant, benevolent-looking person, who seemed particularly interested in the jaded but still comely appearance of Thorna.

" You came," she observed to her visitors, " from the east. Ah ! there have been awful occurrences in that part; but many lives, I hope, have not been lost."

The widower sighed, and Thorna burst into tears.

" We are from Sida," said the clergyman. This was a key to the mystery.

" From Sida !" exclaimed Olaf, looking for a moment at the father and daughter, " Yes, surely, this is my old friend Gudbrand Magnusson ; and this is his daughter."

He embraced both very affectionately ; and just at this moment the son came in, a lad of about nineteen, who almost immediately exclaimed, " These are the good people that were so kind to me at Sida ! "

All now gave thanks to God for bringing them once more together.

The visitors had a long and melancholy tale to relate, which was listened to with much interest and sympathy. The residents at Loftafell said that some ashes had fallen at a little distance from them, but their grounds hitherto had been free from harm. There had been, they said, a few slight shocks of earthquake.

In this comparatively secure retreat, amidst the kind attentions of the inmates, we may leave Gudbrand, Thorna, and the clergyman, while we attend to some other matters.

CHAP. XXIV.

It will be grateful to the feelings of some readers to find that the interesting and worthy Galmina was not really dead. She was left apparently without life; but she revived, and arose as it were from the grave. Poor Vola was actually dead.

When the survivors were about to leave the valley in the morning, they were so much terrified that they scarcely knew what they did. All persons who were senseless, were supposed to be lifeless. Thorna knelt on the ground, and with a heart full of anguish, kissed her dear sister — her only sister — whom she was never to see again. What an awful, yet tender and affectionate act! Never before had that lip been clay-cold! Never before had that body been spiritless! The cold clay, the unconscious clay did Thorna, with an agonised feeling, embrace; — the first embrace of her lifeless

sister—the last embrace of her beloved Vola. She kissed Galmina also; and, with an almost superhuman effort, placed the bodies by the side of each other, that they might sleep together, and wake together on the morning of the resurrection.

Every thing remained still in this valley until the night, when there was a heavy fall of hot cinders, some of which fell on Galmina; and one of them, resting on her neck, occasioned such acute pain as to awake her from the trance. She had been for some time suffering severely, and had been terrified by a vision, in which she thought that she had died without the favour of God, and had been sent to a place of misery. She fancied that she was lying in a dark and doleful pit, cut off from mercy and hope, where nothing was visible but, here and there, a few sparks of fire on the ground. While she lay in extreme distress, many fiends arose from the ground, or burst out from the sides of the cavern and surrounded her. They were armed with sharp weapons, tipped with fire. They danced around

her with horrid gestures, and chanted hellish songs, and wounded her with their weapons, putting her to great torture. She groaned, and rolled on the ground, and cried to them to spare her for pity's sake; but instead of heeding her entreaties, they danced the more violently, and accompanied their sport with shouts, and grimace, and savage joy; until she sprang up, and sat on the ground, when the fiends vanished. The vision was now terminated, but she knew it not, for she was suffering much pain; all around her was dark, and the ground hot. She screamed and uttered lamentations, but was afraid to stir. How long she continued here she knew not; but after a considerable time there were flashes of lightning, which opened glimpses of horror.—There were around her the bodies of the dead, some of them in the convulsed attitudes in which they had been forsaken by the soul.—One with an arm thrown over the head; another with a leg stretched out, while the other was contracted; a third was lying across the corpse of a companion, as if shifted there by muscular con-

vulsions in the agonies of death ; while some, with their eyes open, seemed curiously but coldly looking on her distress. After the lightnings had ceased, she continued sitting, almost petrified, in what she believed to be her everlasting tomb. The ground was still warm, and, in searching around, she felt something; on tracing it with her fingers, her hand — the back of it, the trembling fingers having yielded to some prominence with which they came in contact — fell almost flat on the clay-cold face of Vola. The contrast between the warm earth and the icy face chilled her with horror. After a short time, her feelings became softened, and she wept; then she prayed to God, and the only hope she had, that she was not in the pit of perdition arose from the reflection, that she was allowed to pray, and to discern something like beamings of consolation. She had, however, no remembrance of the past, and she exclaimed, on sinking again into despondency, “Good God ! What is this ? What is it but the pit of everlasting misery ? This is no dream — no ; it is a dreadful reality.”

She was so much terrified that her hair became stiff and bristly, and her teeth chattered. As the lightnings burst forth again and discovered sights of woe, she perceived something moving at a distance. Another flash exhibited some one walking.

“ Oh ! ” she exclaimed: “ Oh ! for the sake of God and my immortal soul, tell me what I am, and where I am ? ”

The man came towards her, and, for a few moments, was speechless and motionless ; at last he said, “ Do — do not be alarmed ; you are safe.”

“ Oh ! safe — safe,” she exclaimed: “ Where ? where am I ? ” and then, apparently perceiving another meaning to the words, she raved, “ Safe ! shut in — ”

“ Do not,” exclaimed the man, “ be alarmed, my dear lady ! This is the valley of Grof-fernell.”

In a moment the truth flashed on Galmina’s mind. She was so much overcome, that she could not speak, but only weep, for several minutes ; and then becoming somewhat calm,

she replied, "Yes, this is the place in which we spent that awful night. Thank God! Thank God! I was afraid it was the pit of misery. Oh!" she continued, again bursting into tears, "I feared I was lost for ever."

"Ah!" said the stranger, "our case is not so bad as that; but it is dreadful. The night of which you spoke was an awful night; but not so awful as this."

"Oh! no," exclaimed Galmina.

As daylight increased, the dreadful scene opened before them; — the ground was strewed with corpses. Before the day was completely arisen, there was another shower of ashes, which terrified Galmina; and after being burnt a little, she sprang up, and endeavoured to find shelter. She ran on in the hope of succeeding, but no shelter could be found. The man followed close after her, and they were proceeding towards the sea, when the atmosphere became clearer, and the man cried out, "There! there! see, there are some houses." These, however, were only deserted fishermens' huts.

Urged by the burning shower, they quickened their pace. Galmina exerted her utmost energy, reached the entrance of one, sprang into the doorway, and fell down exhausted. This, though a poor shelter, was a great blessing, and probably the cause of their preservation.

The huts appeared to have been left suddenly; perhaps during the first shocks of the earthquake. There was a small quantity of provisions in them, with some articles of furniture. Galmina took possession of one of the dwellings, and Seigfried Oskusson (who had been the possessor of a small farm in Sida), took another.

On the next day, the weather being favourable, Galmina and Seigfried determined to go further, and discover, if possible, the Sida people. There were not nearly as many left in the fatal valley as had come from the tents; and Galmina had not recognised the face of any acquaintance besides that of Vola: it was concluded therefore that the rest were fled;

and as they could not have gone to the east, they were probably gone to the west.

Galmina and Seigfried set out, and kept pretty near the sea; but the rest of the party had gone further inland. They passed over some rocky ground, and along winding and dangerous paths, until they arrived at a cliff, beyond which there was no possibility of proceeding, where, fatigued and bewildered, they sat down. Then they determined on returning to the huts, and making their next excursion further from the sea.

The cliff was very high, and in ascending, Galmina had scarcely perceived the danger; but in descending, it opened to her view, and she became fearful. Seigfried, however, was a good mountaineer, and he conducted his fair companion safely.

Galmina returned much fatigued; a light was procured; some wood kindled, and taking a little food, she lay down on a heap of hay, in a corner of her lonely hut, and slept soundly.

In the morning, the travellers set out on their route, which was more northerly than the

previous one; and after several hours toiling, came to a farm where they were kindly received; but the inmates had seen nothing of the Sida people.

CHAP. XXV.

IT is not to be supposed, that, because Gudbrand and Thorna were surrounded with comforts, and cheered with the kindness of the inmates of Loftafell, they were tranquil and happy: no, there was a worm at the root of their earthly enjoyments. It is true that when they looked to Heaven, the prospect was clear and encouraging; and thus it is generally, when earth becomes darkest, heaven becomes brightest, as the stars shine most brilliantly when there is nothing but themselves to give light. The cause of Gudbrand and Thorna's uneasiness was the absence, and it was to be feared, the death of Eggert and Thord. The maiden had some regard for the latter; not so much as to warrant her in uniting herself with him, but so much as to make her unhappy when she reflected that he might have been

removed from the land of the living by a violent death. She had, however, a strong and natural affection for Eggert. Poor fellow! he was the subject of her day reveries and wandering thoughts at night, when sleep fled from her, and a hurried pulse with a feverish flush accompanied every new imagination of danger. “Is he living? Is he exposed to the fiery torrent, or starvation? Is he dead?—struck by a blast from the molten furnace, or involved in and consumed by it?” These were questions which involuntarily arose in her mind, but she scarcely dared to put them into distinct words; indeed in endeavouring to avoid these anxious thoughts, she was the more painfully haunted by them. Deep sighs would accompany her agitation; then perhaps tears would flow and relieve her; and then sleep would introduce her to alarming dreams. Gudbrand was similarly unhappy. Both had given up Vola and Galmina to that Being in whose hands are the destinies of all; and it was hoped, from the feelings and expressions of both, that God had taken them to himself:

but the other was a matter of suspense; — the mind was sometimes hovering on the wings of hope, and sometimes floundering in the depths of despair. This uncertainty they felt to be dreadful; and, what perhaps will be confirmed by the experience of others, that an evil known is less harassing to the mind than one suspected; in the same way as a sudden and violent death is less painful than a long exposure to suffering and a prospect of death.

“ I really cannot live like this,” said Gudbrand.

“ Nor I, father,” said Thorna; “ for I have no rest by night or day. Perhaps the poor fellows are living; perhaps, through the blessing of Providence, assistance now would save them; but if delayed, they will perish.”

Just then, the clergyman and Olaf Bendeimer came in. “ I must endeavour to find Eggert and the rest,” said Gudbrand, the tears starting in his eyes. The poor old man turned aside his head, and bit his lips, in order to check his almost too powerful emotions.

“ My dear friend ! ” said Olaf, “ I can sym-

päthise with you ; and perhaps a parent's feelings, under such circumstances, can be imagined only by a parent ; but let us not give way to gloomy thoughts," he continued, wiping away a trickling tear, and endeavouring ineffectively to act agreeably with his precept, " let us try what can be done to save them. A few minutes since I was speaking to Sira Gudmerson — who has informed me that this matter hangs as a dead weight on your spirits — and I proposed that we (that is yourself, the clergyman, one of my men, and myself), should set off, and endeavour to make a circuit on the north side of the mountain, and come down just where the young men probably are."

Gudbrand's eyes glistened with gratitude ; but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and he could only look his thanks : in the mean while Thorna arose, and throwing herself at Olaf's feet, before he had time to prevent it, clasped them, and, in the extravagance of her feelings kissed them, and exclaimed, " Oh, good and generous man ! whose delight is in kind actions — in helping the helpless, in cheering

the heart which is bowed down with sorrow.— Oh! do, I intreat you, fulfil your kind proposal; and if the humble expressions of gratitude of a helpless maiden be any reward — If — if the tears of an old man be any reward — they shall be yours. And oh! I beg the God of Heaven to bless you; for you have, indeed —”

Here agitation choked Thorna's voice, and all were weeping.

Olaf's heart was too full for utterance. “ My dear, my noble girl !” he exclaimed; and raising her, placed her on a seat, and rushed out of the room.

The necessary arrangements were made during the day, and on the following morning the four adventurers set out. It has been stated that the farm was situated in a deep valley, and sheltered from the east by lofty cliffs. The travellers took provisions with them, lest unforeseen events should deprive them of assistance from the farmers on their route.

It was in the month of October, when winter was beginning to diffuse its icy influence, that

the party began their journey. The wind blew from the north-east, just in their faces, and blew roughly, especially on the higher ground, a few miles distant from Loftafell, where there was occasionally a slight shower of sand and ashes. This was not brought directly from the volcano, but by gust after gust, until it had reached a distance of sixty miles or more from the mountains. In addition to this, there was a little snow, so that it was, at best, an inauspicious beginning. The journey would be at least one hundred miles; the cold perhaps would increase, and the dangers arising from the volcano would multiply as the travellers proceeded. However, they had begun; they had commended themselves to God, and they were determined to persevere.

The first night was spent in a comfortless dwelling, about thirty miles from home; the inmates of which—who were much alarmed at the convulsions in the east—assured the travellers that it would be impossible for them to proceed in that direction: they themselves, it was added, were intending to leave the farm,

for the grass was nearly destroyed, and the cattle were sickly. Gudbrand and his company, however, proceeded the next morning; and when difficulties opposed them — which was at almost every step, — the thought of rescuing their fellow creatures from danger, and perhaps death, urged them on. The country was becoming more bleak and difficult for travelling; the ground was covered with snow, and underneath was a stratum of ice. The difficulty was principally felt in the afternoon, when they reached some mountains about fifteen miles from the last resting-place; for here, the horses were continually sliding and falling. The eastern horizon, viewed from this place, was novel and awful; for the flames of the volcano were rushing to an astonishing height. The back ground was dark, and the lower part of the flames enveloped in mist and smoke, which made the volcano appear like a vast furnace, partially veiled.

“ How awful,” exclaimed Sira Gudmerson, “ are some of the great processes of nature! awful and sublime! If we could divest our-

selves of fear, we should deem some part of this scenery beautiful."

While the travellers were gazing and admiring, the sky became considerably darker—streams of blackness seemed to shoot from the crater to the heavens ; and, in about a minute, terrific sounds were heard, as of distant trains of artillery. The darkness gradually diminished, and the mountain sent forth puffs of fleecy vapour, which, ascending in rapid succession, formed a majestic pile, on which the rays of the sinking sun faintly gleamed. In a few moments, the flames again burst forth and ascended to Heaven.

When the splendour of the representation was abated, the party endeavoured to proceed ; but in doing so, the horse which carried Sira Gudmerson fell, giving the rider a severe blow. No bone, however, was broken, and the clergyman remounted, though he could ride only with difficulty.

" What chasm is that ?" inquired Olaf, in some alarm, pointing to one at a short distance, which seemed to extend three or four miles.

“ Oh ! ” replied Gudbrand ; “ I hope it is not recently formed.”

“ If,” said Olaf, “ the mountain has been split by the late convulsions, our journey in this direction is ended.”

They found, to their great mortification, that it was newly formed, and deep as well as wide.

“ We must endeavour to retrace our steps,” said Olaf, “ to our last night’s lodgings ; and perhaps, we shall be able to-morrow to find a different route. Now that we are come out, I pray God that we may be enabled to proceed.”

Gudbrand lifted his eyes to Heaven, and his lip quivered as he responded to this petition. “ I know,” said he, “ it is a severe test for the kindness of my friends, to bring them into such an inhospitable and dangerous place ; but — ”

“ My dear friend ! ” exclaimed Olaf, “ make no apologies. I can answer for myself and Sira Gudmerson that we shall be amply repaid if we can succeed.”

"Yes," said the clergyman, "if we have success: and, even yet, I hope we shall — it will be more than a payment for any little engagement of this kind."

The road was so slippery, and the progress of the travellers so slow, that it was dark long before they arrived at the farm. The wind also was strong and very keen. If, instead of blowing in their backs, it had blown in their faces, it is probable that they would never have reached their destination. On some occasions, they were uncertain as to the route, and latterly were much benumbed; a merciful Providence, however, conducted them to their resting-place in safety.

On the next day — the clergyman being almost recovered from his fall — the party set out with the intention of taking a more westerly route. The snow, however, was deep; and after riding about three miles, they found it impossible to proceed, for they could discover no tract, and were in danger of bogs and gullies. Indeed Olaf's man and horse slid down several feet on the side of a deep pit,

and it was only by the sagacity of the animal and the coolness of the rider, under the blessing of Providence, that their lives were saved. Perceiving no chance of success, they returned with heavy hearts to the farm, but were determined, if the weather improved, to renew the attempt. Unfortunately, on the next day, the weather became worse, and the travellers were obliged to set off for Loftafell to save themselves from being imprisoned in the snow.

After a tedious journey, Gudbrand, with a sinking heart, entered the court-yard; and when Thorna flew out to welcome him, and looked anxiously and inquiringly around, as if desirous, but yet fearful of knowing the worst, tears trickled down his cheeks; he alighted, fell into his daughter's arms, and sobbed aloud, while the maiden's tears responded to those of her aged parent. The bystanders were much affected at the scene.

“ My dear friends ! ” said Sira Gudmerson, after a pause of a few minutes, “ there is yet hope; for the arm of Deity is powerful, and

the youths are under his protection. He can preserve them for a month as well as a day."

"Oh! I pray — I hope — said Gudbrand, somewhat recovered, "that the God of mercy will save them."

"My dear father," said Thorna, "how far have you been? I feel very grateful — I thank God for your safe return."

The travellers and their friends now entered the house. Olaf's family were overjoyed to see him, for they were fearful that he would have been detained in the mountains by the snow.

CHAP. XXVI.

AFTER Gudbrand and his friends had been returned about ten days, Sira Sæmonder, the clergyman of Myverdel, came to Olaf Bendlemer's dwelling. He was on his way to Skaffhollt, a place about ten miles distant; and as the snow was deep, and darkness came upon him rather suddenly, he determined on spending a night at Loftafell.

"I am extremely glad to see you," said Olaf, as the clergyman entered; "and I have the pleasure of introducing you to your old friend, Sira Gudmerson."

"Really," he exclaimed, as he embraced his brother clergyman, "I had no expectation of this pleasure. I am very glad to see you."

"This," said Olaf, as Gudbrand entered the room, "is your old friend Magnusson of Sida; and this," he added, "is his daughter."

The stranger was delighted at meeting so many of his old acquaintances. After mutual congratulations were passed, and all were seated in a comfortable room, and provisions brought in, Sira Sæmonder said, "I intend to go, if possible, to Skaffhollt; but I question whether I shall be able to do so."

"You certainly will not," said Olaf: "besides, that part of the country is almost forsaken. How far have you travelled to-day?"

"About twenty miles."

"You have seen and heard little perhaps," said Olaf, "of the distress which exists in this part."

"I have heard pretty much," he replied. "More than ten miles back, in some parts, the sulphurous ashes have done considerable harm; and people are beginning to be alarmed."

"Worse than that is the state of things here; for the grass, in many instances, is destroyed; the cattle are sickly; people are dispirited, and no one scarcely knows what to do. I thank God that I have been wonderfully favoured. — My land has been preserved from volcanic

showers, and my cattle, at present, are well ; but the poor people at Mirar are sadly distressed ; and there are many, in different parts, in great peril. When this will end no one, of course, can tell. I pray it will be soon."

" Oh ! yes," exclaimed Thorna, feeling peculiarly interested in the matter, " I hope—I pray it may be soon."

After a pause, in which the maiden seemed to be deliberating, she inquired, " How is it, Sira Gudmerson, that the expression of hope produces in the mind something like tranquillity and satisfaction ?"

" I have often thought on this subject," he replied ; " and I conclude that the expression is used in the way of a prayer. We are conscious of the presence of at least one spiritual Being ; — one who is able and willing to help us, if we trust in him. Now, when we say ' we hope,' we express our desires to the all-hearing Deity, and conclude that he will gratify us. There is, of course, no regular or distinct process of reasoning ; nor is there when we use the word, pray — ' I pray that

this may happen : ' both words are used in a similar sense."

" I have sometimes thought in the same manner," observed the stranger ; " though I do not know that I have ever put the thoughts in order, and appended to them a distinct conclusion ; and there is, certainly, as much difference between occasional glances at truth, and the marshalling — if I may so term it — of the thoughts, as between the construction of parts of an edifice, and the union of the parts necessary for the completion of the edifice."

" Do you think, Sira Gudmerson," inquired Thorna, " that we may be said to hope when we have no ground of probability ? that is — though I cannot express myself philosophically — can we hope for a thing when we do not expect it ? "

" We may *wish* for it," replied the clergyman ; " but certainly we cannot hope for it unless we expect it. A wish implies merely the desire of the mind ; hope implies both desire and probability ; expectation implies

probability, but is not connected, necessarily, with desire or aversion."

"Then the expression — I expect a thing, but hope it will not happen, or, I am doubtful of it, but hope it will happen, is incorrect perhaps?"

"Of course: the expression is precatory; and a word expressive of desire merely ought to be used. It implies that, agreeably with the natural course of things, an event will or will not happen; but a superior being can overrule it: consequently the speaker means, 'I expect a thing, but I *pray* it may not happen; or, I am doubtful of it, but I pray it may happen.'

"I find by my own experience," said Olaf, "that hope is a very cheering principle. If it were not for this, sometimes I am sure I should sink."

"Yes," replied Sira Gudmerson, "and so we should, all of us; for it is hope alone that supports the mind in many instances. It satisfies us with the past; calms our otherwise querulous and regretful dispositions; and ani-

mates us with the future. It goes before us, makes our way clear, and illuminates our path. Without hope, the future would be dark and comfortless. Without this enlivening and almost divine influence, how should we reconcile ourselves, among other things, to the flight of time? Days, months, and years pass away — we are journeying to the grave; the thought, in itself, is painful, especially if a person be surrounded, as most are, with comforts, — every day brings us nearer to our final home, and we know not of any day that it is not the boundary one — the last of the long catalogue — whose hours terminate at the threshold of eternity. But hope not only reconciles us to the flight of time, but causes us to look forward, with longing expectation, to future days: we wish for weeks and months to roll away, that some favored time — some happy, gilded moment may arrive. It is thus, that the youth pants for manhood — the man anticipates the honours and advantages of middle age; and he of middle age reconciles himself to declining years. The wisdom and

benevolence of the Deity are not more visible, in any instance, than in thus setting, in the distant prospect, good and pleasant things. Now, this principle of anticipation exists in all: with the merely worldly it terminates at a certain point — that point is the limit of earth; but at this point, with the religious, it begins to widen and brighten."

After some other remarks, the conversation turned on Sida; and the fugitives from that place gave an account of their recent dangers and distresses. As night came on, the inmates retired to rest, excepting the stranger, Sira Gudmerson, Gudbrand, and Olaf.

"When," said Sira Saemonder, "we were conversing about Sida, I was about to ask you a question, but on second thoughts I postponed it, because it relates to what should be kept secret; — were the people of Sida alarmed by robbers last year?"

"Yes," replied Gudbrand. "It was quite a new thing for us: indeed, I have not heard that any thing like it has happened since the year 1627, when, it is said, the pirates landed,

and did so much mischief. But why do you ask?"

"Who were the robbers?" inquired Sira Sæmonder.

"There were several in the neighbourhood," said Gudbrand; "but only two were brought to Sida."

"Were these a man and a woman?"

"Yes. But how? —"

"Wait a little," said Sira Sæmonder: "I wish to ask you a few questions."

"The reason I am so anxious," replied Gudbrand, "is that I am much interested in the matter. Did you meet with the woman?"

"No," he replied. "Tell me, however, what you know about the robbers, and then, perhaps, I shall be able to give you some information respecting them."

Gudbrand, as briefly as possible, related what had happened in Sida; and then Sira Sæmonder observed,—"You are mistaken, my dear friend, as to the information which I am able to give you; but it is intimately connected with your narrative. In the latter part of the

hay-harvest, a stranger came to a farm in Myverdel, and inquired if he could obtain work. He was a pitiable object, about fifty years of age, very ragged and squalid. The proprietor of the farm was moved with compassion, and took him into his service, employing him first in the hay-harvest, and afterwards in the *tún*. The man, instead of recovering — for, at first, he seemed unwell, — became worse ; his appetite failed him, and he became dangerously ill. His master was kind, and provided him with many comforts ; but the man was unhappy — there was a canker in his heart, which tortured him with more than bodily sufferings. When he was obliged to keep his bed, I visited him several times ; and, observing that his mind was disturbed, I inquired the cause of it. He evaded the question at first ; but when he was evidently hurrying towards the confines of earth, and the scenes of eternity were opening before him, he became less anxious to withhold the secret. I said to him one day, when no one was present but himself and me, — “ Are you unhappy in respect of the

past or the future? If the past, and you wish to unburden your mind, do so; if the future, remember that now is the only time to prepare for coming events. You are sinking. The arm of God alone can save you from misery."

"Oh!" said he, "both are the cause of my unhappiness. The past arises before me with a catalogue of crimes; the future, with the torments of the damned."

Sira Sæmonder was considerably agitated; and so, indeed, were his auditors.

"You may depend on it," said he, after a moment's pause, "that I was horrified. The man's look also was appalling. As soon as I recovered, I said, 'Remember! the greatest sinner may be forgiven. It is not, I thank God, by our righteousness, but our repentance and a dependance on the Friend of sinners, that we can hope for pardon. If your mind is burdened, remember that invitation of benevolence and sympathy,— 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"Ah! I am not,' he replied, 'weary and

heavy laden with ordinary transgressions—mine are indelible crimes. I suffer now (he spoke in a hollow sepulchral voice) the foretaste—the foretaste of eternal woe.'

"For a few minutes," continued Sira Sæmonder, "I was paralised—my head became dizzy—I was sick and faint. When I recovered, I endeavoured to comfort him, but found my efforts useless. I said to him, 'If there is any thing pressing heavily on your mind, disclose it. I am not influenced by idle curiosity, but the desire of giving you ease. I promise I will not reveal a word of it while you continue alive.'

"After several attempts on his part, in which he seemed totally incapable of beginning, I drew him into a confession, by asking whence he had come, when he arrived at the farm. He replied, 'I came from the mountains.'

"'But, what had you been doing there?' said I.

"'I went to seek for my companions, but they were gone; and I was obliged to sleep in

the open air, and live on juniper berries or moss, which made me very ill.'

" ' But why,' said I, ' did you continue there? '

" ' I determined at last,' he replied, ' that, whatever happened, I would go down amongst the abodes of human beings, and endeavour to work for my living. If I had not been humbled, I should not have condescended to do so.'

" Here, he again ceased. I urged him to proceed.

" He replied, — ' My life is too foul for the light of day.'

" ' Who,' I inquired, ' were your companions? '

" ' Men as abandoned as myself.'

" ' Were you born in this part of the country? '

" ' Ah ! no,' he said; ' the parish dishonoured by my birth was further north. I was born in the neighbourhood of Eydal. In my youth, I was abandoned to all kinds of wickedness; and when I was twenty-four, I persuaded an excellent maiden to accept my attentions. She was ignorant of my character; but I pretended

to be amiable, prudent, and praiseworthy. I married her, and soon began to exhibit my wicked propensities. Dysan (for this was the name of my wife) had twins about twelve months after our marriage, and in the second year she had a daughter. The former were christened Thord and Galmina, the latter Lara.’”

When Sira Sæmonder came to this part of the narrative, a death-chill ran through the veins of his auditors: Gudbrand, in particular, became very pale.

“ Oh ! ” he exclaimed.

“ Hush ! now,” said Sira Gudmerson, “ let us hear the remainder of the account, before you form any conjectures.”

“ Please to proceed,” said Gudbrand; but — ”

Sira Sæmonder continued his narrative :— “ ‘ I spent my time in idleness,’ said the sick man, ‘ and brought ruin on my family as well as myself. Ah ! the greatest ruin — ruin of body and soul on myself. A life of sin, what a dreadful review ! One of my neighbours, on

one occasion, remonstrated with me; when, like Cain, of whom I had read, I rose up in anger, and killed the innocent. I fled to the mountains, and, on the following night, determined to destroy myself. For this purpose, I went to the edge of a tremendous precipice, and, in a state of desperation, flung my hat and jacket over, intending to follow; but, at that moment, a sudden view of the flames of hell opened before me. The pit of perdition seemed to be beneath my feet, and multitudes of lost souls in it, writhing in agony. I started back and ran away. On the next morning, I crept into a dwelling while the family were absent, and procured some food; at the same time, I took away a hat and a jacket, and departed undiscovered. It would be useless to wade through the long catalogue of my crimes: indeed, my soul sickens at the remembrance of them. Oh, that I could change myself into some other man! — into the most abject of God's creatures — into a beast of the field, or a reptile. Oh, that I could be any thing but what I am, with the weight of God's justice

upon me !' He now paused for a few minutes, and I had some difficulty to induce him to proceed. 'I associated,' said he, 'with some of the most abandoned characters; and one in particular, older than myself, was my father in iniquity. I lived by plunder. I delighted in misery and blood. I had, now and then, an inclination to go back to Eydal, but I knew it would be dangerous to do so. Besides, I had heard that my wife and children were dead, so that I was free of the world; and I was determined that the world should, in one way or another, support me in my wicked desires. I assumed the name of Waldi Freyde —'"

Gudbrand became still more agitated — his knees smote each other — he trembled like a leaf, and literally gasped for life. He was so much affected, that Sira Sæmonder ceased for a moment, and became alarmed for his friend.

When Gudbrand recovered, he said, " You must excuse me, but I feared the narrative would take this turn; and as it opens, what dreadful reflections suggest themselves ! However, I will not interrupt you."

“ The poor wretch,” continued Sira Sæmonder, “ appeared to feel that his life had been one of unusual criminality. ‘ I was engaged,’ said he, ‘ in several robberies, both at sea and on the shores of Denmark; and when myself and party, having lost our vessel, took up our abode among the mountains of Iceland, I did, what, alas ! I had often done before—I stained my hands with human blood. The last case, that for which I was apprehended, was the murder of ——’ ”

“ Oh ! ” exclaimed Gudbrand, in a dreadful state of agitation, — “ Pardon me : do not—go no further — wait a little.” He was obliged to lean on his friend Sira Gudmerson, who was almost as much horrified as himself.

“ What is the cause,” inquired Sira Sæmonder, “ of your agitation ? ”

“ Oh ! ” exclaimed Gudbrand (who was now a little recovered), “ it was — it was his own child ! — his own —— ”

A thrill of horror unnerved the stranger; and all remained for some minutes incapable of speaking. At last, Sira Sæmonder ex-

claimed, "Good God ! Is it possible ? Was he such a wretch ?"

"Yes," said Sira Gudmerson, "the reflection is horrible ; but, alas ! it is true ; he murdered his own child, under circumstances of peculiar barbarity."

"Really," said Sira Sæmonder, "my nerves will hardly allow me to proceed : — I will pass over the remainder of his horrible confession but I will merely add that he died on the following day without, I fear, evincing any symptoms of true Christian penitence."

After a little further conversation, Sira Gudmerson observed, "We have much cause to be thankful for being preserved from such awful evils ; for, without the blessing of God, there is no crime but what we might fall into."

It need scarcely be mentioned that this expression was completely in unison with the feelings of the three friends.

CHAP. XXVII.

ON the next morning, the heavens were very dark, and there was, as the people of Loftafell fancied, a tremulous motion of the earth. Sira Sæmonder set out for Skafhollt, but was obliged to return, for the wind was changed, ashes were falling, and the north-east air was extremely bleak. He was now convinced that he could not proceed to the place of his destination. He remained at Loftafell during the night, and on the next morning departed for Myverdel.

After Sira Sæmonder was departed, Gudbrand, Olaf, and Sira Gudmerson resumed the conversation respecting Waldi.

“Really,” said the latter, “I have scarcely recovered from the shock which that disclosure gave me.”

“It is, perhaps, a happy circumstance,” observed Gudbrand, “that poor Galmina has

been taken hence, and preserved from a knowledge of the dreadful discovery. And Thord, too, poor fellow ! I hope that he and dear Eggert——” The old man was much agitated when he thought of his son. “ I hope they are safe: but ——”

“ I think they are safe,” said Olaf. “ We must not suppose that, because they are cut off from their friends, they are cut off from the society of human beings. There are parts inhabited towards the east as well as the west.”

“ Yes, yes,” said Gudbrand; “ that is the ground of my hope. I pray God to preserve them ! It is indeed a great trial to be severed from all. But I will not say all; for God has mercifully preserved one of my dear children; and for this I hope I am grateful. I will not,” he continued, endeavouring to overcome his feelings, “ give way to despondency. It is easy for us to perceive what we have lost, because the loss is fresh in our remembrance; but it is not so easy to perceive what we have retained, because we have been long accustomed to it. However, I was going to say something about

the late painful discovery; but I have forgotten what it was. Oh, I recollect now; it was, that we had better pledge ourselves not to reveal a word of what we have heard, until all of us are agreed in so doing. Sira Sæmonder assured me that he would keep it secret."

"By all means," said Sira Gudmerson; "let us keep it to ourselves. Secrecy can do no harm; relating it, if Thord be living, might destroy his peace for ever."

The three friends then bound themselves to secrecy.

The day was very bleak, and the keen blustering air of evening indicated a bitter night. The family and visitors were assembled at dinner about five. There were six present; the three that have been mentioned, with Malvina, the wife of Olaf Bendlemer, Thorna, and Ribolt, the son of the host. Malvina was engaged, agreeably with the hospitable custom of her country, in attending on her guests; so that she did not sit at table, but sometimes was in the room, and sometimes out of it. When

dinner was nearly over, she came in, and in a hurried manner said, " My dear Ribolt, Ulrafen " (one of the men who worked on the farm) " tells me that something is lying on the ground outside the gate. He is afraid to go near it."

" Something on the ground !" exclaimed Ribolt. " I suppose 'tis nothing to be afraid of. However, I will see what it is."

The night was dark, but the snow enabled the young man to discover something outside the paling. He stept cautiously towards it, and, as his courage was somewhat slackened, contented himself with looking on it and turning back.

" Well, Ribolt," said his mother, " what is it ? "

" I think," said he, " that it is a woman ; but whether it be a woman, or a fairy* in human form, I know not. However, it was no

* The Icelanders believed that fairies were of various kinds ; and that, sometimes, they assumed the form of deceased persons.

use to go near it without a light. It will be better to speak to father." And then, bursting into the room, he exclaimed, " Father, there 's something outside the gate, but I don't know what it is."

Olaf and his friends immediately came out : even Thorna joined the group ; and now Malfvina, having a female companion, began to wax bold.

" It is, I dare say," observed Thorna," some poor creature benighted, and benumbed with cold."

The gate was opened, when a young female, pale and emaciated, was found almost senseless on the snow. She could not speak, and could scarcely open her eyes ; but she was taken up and carried into the house, where every attention was paid to her ; her hands and feet were rubbed with snow, then with dry cloths ; then cordials were administered, and she was put into a warm bed. Thorna, as might have been expected, was indefatigable in this labour of benevolence.

The poor wanderer was still speechless, but

evinced by her countenance that she was pleased and grateful. Almost as soon as she was laid in the bed, being exhausted, she fell asleep. In order to prevent disturbance, no one remained with her but a little girl. The family returned to the sitting-room, when the dinner was removed; and after a short time coffee was introduced.

“Who can this be?” said one and another; but no one could give a reply.

“It is, perhaps,” said Gudbrand, “some poor creature fled from one of the farms that was overwhelmed with lava, or burnt with ashes. Yours is truly,” he continued, addressing himself to Olaf, “a home for the homeless.”

“While God preserves me and my little property,” said Olaf, “I shall feel pleasure in helping those who are stripped of theirs. Indeed, this is no more than my duty, and it is agreeable with the designs of Providence; for I do not think he would bring the storm of affliction on his creatures without providing here and there a harbour, to which, in their distress, some might run and be safe. However, we

know not what a day may bring forth: I may be exposed to calamity to-morrow, and be compelled to seek for shelter in some friendly haven."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Gudbrand, "I hope the evil has reached its utmost height, and that peace and prosperity will again beam on this afflicted country."

It was now mentioned that the stranger was awake, and apparently much relieved; at which intelligence Thorna, on the wings of joy, flew to the invalid's room. The stranger was evidently poor: her appearance was that of squalid indigence; but she was a suffering fellow-creature, and this was enough to excite the sympathy of Thorna. There was, however, with all the external indications of poverty, something in her superior to the common character of women in that country. She was young; and, although pale and sickly, there were some lines of beauty in her countenance: indeed, she seemed like a delicate flower blighted.

Thorna, on entering the room, said, "I am

glad you are better. I hope you will soon recover."

She approached the bed, and took hold of the stranger's hand, which was lying outside the clothes. As she held it, and her eyes dropped on the invalid, the latter looked up, smiled, and said, in a whisper, " My dear Thorna !"

Thorna let the hand drop, became very pale, and sank back on a couch: but no one besides heard the whisper, or could guess the cause of her agitation. The invalid closed her eyes, and said nothing. Thorna was taken out of the room; and, when she recovered, Malvina said, " My dear, what was the cause of your agitation ?"

" Did you not hear ?" inquired Thorna. " The stranger whispered my name !"

" Your name !" exclaimed Gudbrand, in much surprise: " who can she be ?"

" Perhaps," said Sira Gudmerson, " it is some one that we left at the farm."

" Yes, I dare say it is," observed Gudbrand, somewhat relieved from his embarrassment. " I

will go up, and endeavour to find out who she is."

"Do, father," said Thorna. "I am anxious to know; I think I never saw her before; I will go with you."

"No, no, child; you had better stay here."

Gudbrand went to the stranger's apartment: but she was apparently asleep, and he did not disturb her. The truth is, however, she was unwilling to increase the excitement, and would not reveal herself.

The good people at Loftafell retired to rest; but Thorna could scarcely sleep: she could not imagine who it was that had whispered her name. The stranger slept soundly, and did not awake until the family had begun breakfast; when some coffee was taken to her. As soon as breakfast was concluded, Gudbrand said, "I shall not be easy until I have discovered who the stranger is: she has seen me before, without doubt, although I have never seen her, or, at least, never taken particular notice of her: but I believe young persons ac-

quire a stronger impression of the aged than the aged do of the young."

Gudbrand proceeded to the room, and Thorna, with some of the household, followed. The old man approached the bed, and spoke to the stranger, who opened her face, which previously had been almost covered. The light of day was very different from the glimmering of the lamp: besides, the stranger was refreshed, and endowed with something of her natural feelings and appearance. Thorna's eyes fell on the invalid, as the latter uncovered her face; and she cried out "Good God! who is this?" She rushed forward, and threw herself on the stranger.

Gudbrand turned to the company in great agitation, and said, "It is Galmina!"

In a moment, the feeling of confidence which had possessed Thorna departed: she fancied it was not a human being. She arose from the bed, and, throwing herself on a couch by the side of Gudbrand, exclaimed, "It cannot be!" and, with excessive feeling, fainted. Gudbrand also was incredulous that what he had seen was

really Galmina; and the rest of the company were so much terrified, that one after another glided out of the room, believing they were in the presence of a supernatural being.

Galmina herself became alarmed. She had unconsciously excited terror in others, and now, being affected by sympathy, began to scream; and, really, owing to the cold which she had, her voice was anything but human. Thorna, half roused, began to scream also; while Gudbrand was panic-struck, and seemed incapable of motion. Sira Gudmerson, perceiving the deplorable state in which they were, and prompted by friendship, rushed into the room for the purpose of bringing out Thorna and her father. But he had no sooner seized the former, and helped the latter to rise, than Galmina, fearing she knew not what, sprang up—she was then very pale and haggard,—and, as they were retreating with all speed out of the room, she leaped from the bed with a dreadful howl, sprang into the midst of them, seized Sira Gudmerson with a convulsive grasp, and, falling, pulled him down with her; while Gudbrand and

his daughter, unnerved and paralysed, fell as dead. In a few moments, Galmina, with almost superhuman strength, sprang up, and, bursting through the people who were standing trembling or screaming in the passage, rushed onward, arrived at the courtlet, and fell down in a state of insensibility.

It would be impossible to describe the terror and disorder which prevailed; for all believed that Galmina was dead, and had been so for three or four months, and that some supernatural being had taken her form. The poor stranger was suffered to remain lying on the snow-covered ground; but the cold revived her: she arose, and seated herself, more dead than alive—and scarcely defended from the icy air by her scanty clothing,—upon a bench at the doorway.

When the people of the house were recovered a little, they were surprised and ashamed at their conduct, and could scarcely conceive how such terror could have seized them.

“ My dear friends, search for the poor girl,” said Gudbrand.

The turn in Gudbrand's feelings served as a guide for the feelings of others.

"We have been infatuated!" exclaimed Sira Gudmerson; "there are no such beings as fairies: the Holy Bible mentions nothing of them. God has wrought a miracle, and brought back our dear Galmina to us. Let us not sin by tempting him. Let us attend to the poor maiden, and entreat God to forgive our folly."

This advice was very welcome, for all were now inclined to atone for their conduct, and all seemed rejoiced that the feelings of all were changed. Sira Gudmerson led the way; and the poor maiden was found sitting on the bench, weeping and shivering; a sight calculated to move the sternest heart. All began to weep, and their tears seemed to wash away the little that remained of their causeless trepidation. Just as the household had gathered about the maiden, Thorna came, and, clasping Galmina around the neck, kissed her, and exclaimed, "Pardon me, my dear friend, I was infatuated

— I knew not what I was doing. God has restored you to us; we will fear no more.”

The poor maiden was conducted by Thorna and the hostess to her bed, where she was furnished with every comfort. The clouds of darkness and anxiety began to roll away, and the prospect brightened with confidence and tranquillity; but when Thorna inquired of her friend respecting her wonderful deliverance, and carried her attention back to the awful valley of Groffernell, both maidens were similarly, and deeply affected — Thorna on account of Vola, and Galmina, of Thord.

“ Oh, my dear Vola,” cried Thorna, sitting on the edge of the bed, and wringing her hands, “ shall I never see you more? My dear — my dear sister !”

And Galmina, in great anxiety, looking around for some one to give her an answer, exclaimed, rising from the bed, “ Oh, where is Thord? Where is he? Is he here?” And, receiving no answer from those around, who were startled at the sudden exhibition of distress, she exclaimed, “ Oh, merciful God!

where is he? Thou hast not taken him? —
Thou hast not left me alone?"

These exclamations from Galmina, instead of diverting the distress of Thorna, opened in her mind and in that of Gudbrand, who had come in, on hearing his daughter's cries, — another source of disquiet; for where Thord was, there was Eggert; hence father and daughter were struck, as it were, by a paralysing dart, and they hung on each other in speechless distress.

Malvina, who had left the room, now rushed in, and hearing the cause of the excitement, exclaimed, " My dear Thorna and Galmina ! do not offend God by doubting and desponding. You have both of you probably brothers living, and they are separated from you only for a short time."

" Yes, yes," exclaimed Olaf; " I hope the good Being, whose watchful eye is over them, will restore them to you in safety."

Gudbrand left his daughter, and went with Sira Gudmerson into the court-yard, where a few turns in the open air restored him to his

usual tranquillity ; and Thorna, throwing her arms around the neck of Galmina, exclaimed, “ My dear friend ! let us put our trust in God, and bow to his sacred will. He will keep them I hope, and restore them to us.”

The house of mourning again assumed an aspect of tranquillity, and joy brightened occasionally amidst the shadows of woe. Galmina, in various parts of the day, related the particulars of her preservation, and the circumstances which had afterwards transpired. We must, however, postpone the maiden’s account of her excursion from the farm to Loftafell, until the next chapter.

CHAP. XXVIII.

“ WHEN I arrived at the farm,” said Galmina, “ after leaving the fishermen’s huts, I was completely exhausted; indeed fatigue and agitation threw me into a fever, which continued for nearly a week, during which time my kind host and hostess were very attentive to me. But they had much to distress them. I pitied them exceedingly, and sometimes forgot my own troubles in contemplating theirs. They had been married but a short time; and when they were about to be comfortably settled, their land was covered with ashes; their cattle was nearly destroyed, and the distant mountain was threatening to overwhelm them with cinders or lava. I thank God, I became a little better. One morning pretty early, Ulfar, my host, came in much agitated, and said, ‘ I fear some fresh evil is coming upon us, for the sky

towards the north is covered with vapour.' Seigfried was in the room with Asdisa and myself. We ran out, and were much alarmed at beholding a vast volume of steam, apparently two or three miles distant.

"Stay here,' said Ulfar to his wife and me. 'Seigfried and I will run up and see what it is.'

"Asdisa objected; but her husband said, 'We must go, for perhaps we shall be obliged to fly for our lives; and the sooner we know the better.'

"Do not run any risk then,' said his wife. 'Galmina and I will follow you at a little distance.'

"No, do not,' he replied. 'Prepare yourselves for flight. Get together any little things that you can carry. See! the vapour is approaching.'

"Ulfar and his companion ran about a mile, when we saw them stop for a moment, and then, turning suddenly, they ran back as fast as possible. We got ourselves ready, so that, when they returned and Ulfar said, 'My dear

Asdisa, we must not stop a moment!' we set out immediately.

"' What is it?' inquired the terrified wife of her husband, as we hurried along.

"' I will tell you presently,' said he. ' We must cross that river before we shall be safe.'

" In a few minutes we arrived on the edge of the waters. The river was wide; Ulfar plunged in, but it was so deep that he was obliged to return.

"' We must go a little further up,' said he; ' and we must be quick, for the water is warm; it will, I fear, be hot in a short time.'

" We were now in great alarm; for the fording-place was considerably higher up, and we dared not go so far as that: at length, necessity made us select an unfrequented part of the river. Ulfar took Asdisa, and got on pretty well for some distance; but the water suddenly became deep, and he had much difficulty to get her through it. However, we were soon glad to perceive them safe on the other side. Seigfried then conducted me across in the same track.

“ When we arrived on the opposite bank, we discovered the cause of our alarm. The wind was blowing up the river and driving back the steam, which enabled us to perceive, without a veil, a vast mass of fire curling and falling in the same dreadful, but magnificent manner as the lava at Sida. When the surface broke, and the glowing fluid burst forth, the surrounding vapour resembled flame, being intensely illumined.

“ Having escaped the danger, we fell on our knees, and gave thanks to a merciful Providence. If the lava had flowed during the night, the consequences would have been fatal. — We should have been cut off from retreat, with a stream of fire on each side of us. Many, I fear, were thus encompassed.

“ The poor creatures that we left at the farm,” exclaimed Sira Gudmerson, “ must have been placed in this dreadful condition. It makes my heart bleed to think of them— saved from one peril, and then another, to be enveloped in flames, or confined as prisoners

within a narrow boundary — a wall of fire ; and starved to death."

" Those persons," said Gudbrand, " must have left the farm. They could not have remained a week after we parted from them ; for the ground was then covered with ashes, and there were some heavy showers a few days afterwards."

" I hope they are safe !" said Sira Gudmerson, with much earnestness. " There is something unnerving in the reflection, that those with whom we have spent our days in kindness and friendship, may have been exposed to dreadful sufferings, and burnt, or entombed alive."

" It is unnerving indeed !" exclaimed Galmina, bursting into tears. (The clergyman had unconsciously awoke the painful remembrances of the maiden, which were but partially lulled.) The grief of Galmina was infectious ; and it was some time before tranquillity was restored. The narrative was not continued then, but was postponed until the evening.

" I believe," said Galmina, on resuming the

account of her escape, " that I mentioned our passage through a river. After we had given thanks to a merciful Providence, we were hurried on by Ulfar. We travelled several miles, and rested for a short time on the bank of a second river, less difficult to cross than the other, but very wide. In a small parish, about two miles distant, (I forget the name), Ulfar's father lived ; and to this place we were bound. It was almost dark when we reached it. The family, as might have been expected, were very glad to see their friends, but much distressed at the accounts which they heard. On the next day, Seigfried set off for the house of a relative, a few miles distant. I was now with Ulfar's family, but knew not where to go — where to find my friends ; — and indeed I knew not whether I had any in the world. The family were very kind to me ; but I felt lonely, and unhappy. At last, the joyful tidings came that a part of my friends were at Loftafell ; and I determined on setting out for it, though I scarcely knew how ; for by this time a large quantity of ashes had fallen, and

the cattle were so much distempered that only one horse, strong enough for a journey, could be procured. The household also were so much disheartened at the prospect of their own distresses, as to be scarcely able to exert themselves for others. I decided, however, on setting out: I embraced my friends, and commended them to God; and Ulfar, seeing me determined, declared he would go a part of the journey with me. The horse was brought; and I was made to ride it, while Ulfar proceeded on foot. The distance was thirty miles; and when we had travelled about one-half of the way, we came to a house, where we thought it better to continue for the night. The accommodations were poor, but the inmates were very kind; and after resting in tolerable comfort, we resumed our journey. The heavens now, towards the north-east, were very dark, and the ground was covered with snow; but there had been none on the country further to the east. I perceived that Ulfar was uneasy about home, and begged him to leave me — but he refused; after some time,

however, observing his extreme anxiety, — for the eastern horizon exhibited a singular appearance, — I persuaded him to return.

“ ‘ The distance,’ said he, ‘ to Loftafell is not great, and the road is almost straight ; you cannot miss it.’

“ He then affectionately bade me adieu ; and set off, at a brisk trot, homewards.

“ I went on, as I fancied, in a straight line ; but being full of anxious thoughts, did not observe where I was going ; and lost my way. On looking around, I found I was proceeding towards the eastern horizon. There was no sun to direct me ; the only guide was the aspect of the heavens. I altered my course, and went as near as possible to the west ; but I was so much fatigued that I could scarcely walk. The wind blew keenly ; the ground was covered with snow ; night was approaching, and I knew not how far I was from Loftafell. At one time, discouraged and exhausted, I was about to sit down, and then, probably, I should never have arisen : happily, before it was quite dark, I discovered some houses, and was glad

to find on inquiry, that Loftafell was only a mile distant. I was almost sinking; but I hurried on. Once or twice, in descending the pathway, being weak and the ground slippery, I fell. On the last occasion, I bruised myself pretty much, and became benumbed; however, I contrived to arrive at the court-gate, but could not open it. I was incapable of calling, or indeed of using any exertion. The wind was very icy, and I think some snow was falling. Fatigued and faint, I leant against the gate; then I sunk down by it: every thing around me became dim, and faded into darkness."

CHAP. XXIX.

FOR about a fortnight after Galmina had visited Loftafell, the wind blew from the south, with mild weather, and little was seen or felt of the volcanic eruption. On several occasions Olaf and his visitors ascended the cliffs to look at the eastern horizon; sometimes they found it dark, and at others times very fiery. During this period there were some slight shocks of earthquakes.

“I have no doubt,” said Sira Gudmer-
son, “there are great convulsions in the east,
but the providence of God keeps us from
harm.”

The wind, which had been moderate, increased until it became a gale. One afternoon it swept furiously up the valley, accompanied by sleet, which was soon exchanged for heavy rain. The gale increased during the night;

the noise was terrific; the roaring of the tempest, the bursting of newly-made cataracts from the cliffs, and the sweeping of the torrent through the valley. The house shook very much, and it was apparently afloat; for the whole of the lands were deluged, and if the building had not been raised a little from the common level, it would probably have been swept away. The darkly veiled moon imparted just light enough to exhibit the horrors of the storm.

“ Oh !” cried one of the inmates, peering out, “ there goes something. What is it ?”

“ It is a tree,” said one.

“ No,” cried another, “ it is a house.”

But it was soon gone; it was swept out of sight for ever. On the next day, it was discovered that a dwelling had been carried away, and two persons drowned.

In a few minutes there was a tremendous crash. “ Oh ! oh !” all cried, “ what is that ?” and their haggard countenances, even in that faint light, told a tale of horrible expectation. At length it was concluded, that large masses

of the cliffs had fallen, and occasioned this alarm.

The fears of the inmates were scarcely abated, when a great part of the roof, towards the south, was torn away. The family were in the northern part of the house when this happened, and fearing that the whole building was coming down, rushed into the court, where they found themselves nearly waist-deep in water. They got back to the house, and regained the elevated situation which they had left; and being conscious that no human efforts could counteract the fury of the tempest, they bowed themselves before the Father of Heaven, and prayed for protection. As the morning dawned, the storm abated, and the family retired to rest.

Daylight discovered the accident to be less important than had been expected. Two rooms had been unroofed; but as the rain had ceased, no great damage was done. A late breakfast brought the family together in pretty good spirits, and grateful for their preservation.

"This must have been an awful night at sea," said Gudbrand.

"I never heard the wind so hard before," said Thorna. "I have no doubt that many an ill-fated vessel has been lost to-night."

"*Ill-fated?*" inquired Gudbrand."

"That is, perhaps, father," said Thorna, "an improper term; for strictly speaking, there is no fate or appointment but what arises from the will of God."

"Yes," observed Sira Gudmerson; "none but what arises, directly or indirectly, from that source. The term fate, however, is sometimes not improperly used to express effects which naturally, or perhaps necessarily, result from certain influences. For instance, when a man is contending with deadly evils which he cannot overcome, his destruction may be said to be fated; that is, without a miracle, it cannot be prevented. The condition of a seaman, however, as you have observed, exposed to the fury of the tempest in a gloomy night, is truly pitiable; for he knows not, probably, where he is, or where he is going; the next object he be-

holds may be black, overhanging rocks — the frowning tomb-stones of his unconsecrated grave."

" It must be awful, indeed," said Olaf, " for a man to be in the immediate prospect of death, and so terrific — that of drowning ! Perhaps he perceives nothing around him but the trackless boundless ocean ; and his soul is harrowed with the reflection that, in a few moments, he shall be stifled in the waters, and go down to his grave in darkness. Oh ! it is soothing to our souls when we are in distress to think that some one is near ; that some one watches us and heaves a sigh of pity, and pours forth his soul in silent sympathy, and breathes a prayer to Heaven. It is, it is indeed soothing ; but," he added, his countenance at the same time exhibiting the deep feelings of his mind, " to go down into the dark and awful depths, unseen and unlamented, to be blotted out from our citizenship of earth in a manner so inglorious, to sink among fierce monsters, who will perhaps contend for our

poor body, is indeed a humiliating, a chilling thought!"

"Yes, it is so," said Sira Gudmerson; "human beings are occasionally exposed to dreadful evils; but it is pleasing to reflect that calamities are not permanent; and that there is a land of safety and repose, in which, if we obtain the favour of God, we shall dwell for ever: where no storms disturb, no chilling air annoys, no mist or darkness deceives, no pestilence, volcanos, or earthquakes affright, and no death is hid in ambush. How delightful it will be—how reviving to our harassed souls, to breathe the breath of immortal life—to contemplate immortal scenes—to look around, above, and beneath, in the breadths, the heights, and the depths of eternity, and to behold nothing but beauty and bliss!"

"God grant," exclaimed Gudbrand, "that we may reach these happy regions." To which petition all responded.

"There are," said Olaf, "wonderful escapes at sea; and if the arm of Deity did not sometimes interfere, I do not see how poor

creatures exposed to the tempest and raging sea could be saved? There was a remarkable instance of preservation a short time since. A fisherman, who lives about two miles from Loftafell, was putting to sea one morning;— It was a beautiful morning, with scarcely a breath of air to diminish the brightness of the glassy waves — and his wife, who was unwell, begged him to take her, with the little one (a girl of about two years old), on board. He possessed a strong affection for her; and love perhaps may exist, and exhibit itself as delicately among the poor as the rich."

"Perhaps there is," observed Sira Gudmerson, "if the term be allowed, a moral as well as an intellectual genius amongst men; so that, as some rise into scientific or literary eminence without help, others rise into the perception of moral propriety and beauty. Perhaps it may be better distinguished as the moral taste, in opposition to the intellectual; and I see no reason why one as well as the other may not exist among the poor."

"There would be a danger," said Thorna,

“ that minds so delicate and susceptible would not succeed in meeting with suitable companions; and thus, like poppies on the rocks, they would perish in the winter’s cold.”

“ There is some risk of this,” observed Sira Gudmerson; “ but similar dispositions generally associate with each other, as the rare and more spiritual substances fly off from earth, and gather together in the regions of light.”

“ This,” said Thorna, with an involuntary sigh, “ is not always so.”

“ No, it is not,” said Olaf; “ and I am sorry for it; but we must expect that humanity will meet with many a trial; indeed the more sensitive it is, the more likely it is to be assailed, and to suffer from the shock. However, I will return to my narrative. The poor woman wished to be taken on board, hoping that a cruise, if the wind freshened, would be beneficial for her. The husband was reluctant; but his objections were overcome by her persuasions. ‘ However,’ said he, ‘ I shall not

go far to sea; the fine weather will not last long.'

" She went on board; the sun shone brightly; not a ripple was visible on the water, but it gently hove, as you have seen it sometimes, into little pyramids, and on every pyramid was the reflection of the glowing sun. The tide, and a whispering breeze which occasionally sprang up, carried them slowly from the shore. The dark cliffs arose to a stupendous height, in some parts resembling temples; in one, particularly, there seemed to be a flight of steps, and at the summit a magnificent entrance. There were also, at a considerable distance, the peaks of mountains, whose snow-clad summits were dimly visible through thin, but silvery vapours. I mention these things, because, unfortunately, the fisherman and his companion were so much attracted by them, — he pointing out and mentioning the names of the more prominent objects; and she, as well as himself, admiring the varied scene* — that

* It may be fancied that this engagement is too intellectual for a fisherman and his wife; but, Dr. Henderson

it was not until the sun was clouded, and the wind rising in gusts, they began to think of other matters.

“ ‘ I shall have no fishing to-day,’ said Wigfried Ionderson.

“ ‘ Never mind, for once,’ said Lundisa. ‘ You will have the boat to yourself to-morrow; and then you can do what you like.’

“ ‘ Yes,’ said he, ‘ if it be fine; but we shall have rough weather soon, and we had better make for the land.’

“ They were now five or six miles from the shore, and were drifting to the south-east.

“ ‘ I would not have passed Werandi point,’ said Wigfried, ‘ if I had thought of it; for the wind is now freshening from the north-west, and I fear we shall have a strong current to contend with; but, if so, I will use the oars.’

says, “ I scarcely ever recollect entering a hut, where I did not find some individual, or another, capable of entering into a conversation with me, on topics which would be reckoned altogether above the understandings of people in the same rank of society in other countries of Europe.”
— *Travels*, p. 25.

“ The boat was then put in sailing trim ; and, like a living thing, she combatted the rising waves, cutting along almost in the wind’s eye. Several tacks, however, were made before any considerable distance was gained, for the tide was against them, and as they neared the point, it increased in strength. Wigfried gave the charge of the helm to Lundisa, that he might push on with the oars ; but, on looking for them discovered, to his great consternation, they were gone. When, or in what way they were lost, he could not guess ; — the matter seemed very mysterious. His first exclamation was that of despair ; but he soon regained his self-possession, and endeavoured to cheer his companion, who was now becoming alarmed. In the hurry (Lundisa being an indifferent sailor) the boat missed stays, and fell away, quivering and reeling, before the wind. With much difficulty, and not without the exercise of considerable skill, she was brought round, when she lay-to buoyantly and gaily like a sea-bird. The gale, however, was increasing ; — the moaning of the wind was succeeded by

rushing and thundering ;— the clear sky was exchanged for thick, dirty weather ;— the patterning drops were succeeded by drenching rain. Hope was now, apparently, flying from them ;— the land was become invisible ; and the boat, plunging, and dashing away the smaller waves, was yet, sometimes, struck by heavy seas, which made her reel like a drunken man ; and, to increase the misery of those on board, she was fast drifting to leeward. Thus they continued, in great alarm, the gale increasing, when a tremendous sea struck the weather-bow of the boat, swept over it, and floated out Lundisa with the child in her arms, Wigfried being left, clinging to a rope, and the vessel, dismasted, struggling for existence. Providentially, the boat recovered herself, and drifting with the wave, was swept close by Lundisa, who was grasping her little one, and just in the act of sinking. Wigfried was stu-pified by the violent shock ; but he had a glimpse of his beloved wife, and seizing her, got her, though he scarcely knows how, into the boat. Every bit of canvass had been

stripped away, and the little vessel was drifting, with her side to the wind; — now on a hill of waters, and now in a deep valley, in danger every moment of going over: but Wigfried knew what alone could save her: and, with great presence of mind, as soon as his wife and child were safely stowed, he seized two or three of the stones that were used for ballast, and throwing them into a net, fastened the whole with a rope at the bow, and flung it overboard. This served as a check or drag for the vessel, and kept her with her head to the wind. The gale was now increased to a hurricane; the rain was pelting; nothing was visible but raging billows, with the disabled boat sometimes above and sometimes beneath them; and the mist, with mountainous waves rolling on in the obscurity, and threatening to burst upon them. They could do nothing but hold fast by the boat, and put their trust in God. They were driving they knew not where, except that it was further and further on the open sea. Here they continued until the shadows, — the awful shadows of night

closed around them ; — when not a star was seen, nor any light of the moon, but occasionally, a gleaming and flashing of the tempestuous sea. When the boat was struck by the billows, and trembled as if on the brink of destruction, a scream would escape from Lundisa, while the heart-rending cries of the child, and a groan from Wigfried — involuntarily arising from the agony of his soul, — were the only accompaniments of the death-song of the tempest.

“ Without being prolix,” continued Olaf, “ I may add, they continued in this dreadful condition during the whole night, the next day, and the following night ; and after having been made the sport of the waves, driven in this direction and that, agreeably with the change of wind, and a tempest all the time, they were brought back to the coast of Iceland, and cast ashore on the very top of the tide, on a sand-bank, where they were left almost dry, within a mile of their home. This was one of the most astonishing instances of preservation that, I think, I have ever known.”

“Indeed,” said Sira Gudmerson, “it is an instance well worth recording and remembering. They were left alive to tell the tale, and it is a tale of great suffering; but how many are exposed to days and nights of peril on the deep, and then sink in the dark waters, and no one hears of them !”

“Ah,” replied Olaf, the tear of sympathy starting in his eye, “there are many such cases.”

The forenoon was spent in repairing the roof, and, very fortunately, it was completed by the afternoon; for about that time the gale returned, and raged with considerable fury.

Olaf Bendlemer possessed a smaller farm than what he occupied, which was situated almost close to the sea, and rented by Leikner Ospen. The dwelling belonging to it was very low, and being sheltered from the south, was scarcely affected by the gale. On the morning after Olaf’s house was damaged, Leikner came and offered his services, which were accepted. In the evening the wind was most tempestuous, and the rain descended in

torrents, so that he had much difficulty to return. On the way, he discovered a light two or three times which, from the situation, he thought must be at sea; and after a short time, by the help of a little moonlight, discerned on the foaming waters what appeared to be a vessel. The shore was composed of shingle and rocks; the wind was driving furiously on the land: "If that really be a vessel," exclaimed Leikner, "God have mercy on the crew, for she will be dashed to pieces!" He was much terrified, and getting on as fast as possible to his house,—(the wind was so strong that, sometimes, he could scarcely keep his legs; and at other times, half bent to the ground, he laboured onward),—he told his wife what he had seen. Then, again, he endeavoured to descry the vessel; but, his vision having been affected by the lamp-light, he could not for some time, discover any thing. At length, he saw it again.

"I am sure," said Leikner to his wife, who was a kind-hearted woman, "the vessel will be lost."

“ Can nothing be done ? ” inquired Gudby.

“ I do n’t know what can be done,” he replied, “ unless it be to watch the fate of the vessel, and to give assistance to the poor seamen if she be driven ashore.”

Once more they strained their eyes in spite of wind and weather, and the ship appeared to be fixed.

“ My dear Leikner,” said Gudby, “ run to Loftafell ; the kind-hearted people there would never forgive you for suffering any one to be in distress without calling them, whatever might be the weather.”

“ Stay within doors, then,” said Leikner, “ I will run up as quickly as possible. I shall be able to get on pretty well, for I shall go before the wind.”

Leikner wrapped himself in his rough-weather coat, and set off for Loftafell. He almost flew on the wings of the wind, and entering the court, got into the house, shut the door, and was actually in the room with the household before any one knew that he was come ; the storm was making such a noise.

“ Why, how is this?” exclaimed Olaf; “ what brings you now?”

“ There is a wreck, I fear,” replied Leikner, “ down on the coast.”

An exclamation of painful surprise arose from several voices, and all, in an instant, were on their feet.

“ But what will you do?” inquired Malvina. “ The storm is raging fearfully.”

“ Is the vessel on shore?” eagerly inquired Olaf.

“ Not on shore, but at a short distance,” replied Leikner.

“ Are you sure it is a vessel?” rejoined Olaf.

“ Oh yes, I saw it distinctly, and Gudby saw it.”

“ Well then,” exclaimed Olaf; “ if God permit me, I ’ll see what it is.”

“ But all will not go?” said Malvina.

“ No, no,” replied her husband; “ our friend Gudbrand is unwell, and so is Sir Gudmerson; besides, they know nothing of the coast, and might come to harm. Ribelt

and I, with the two men, will go, and you shall remain in charge of the invalids."

Then, preparing himself for the expedition, he said to his son, "Now, my dear boy, hurry on Wigfer and Grimson."

In a minute or two, the party set off; and, like a ship which for a few seconds after her canvass is set makes no headway, but is drifted back by the tide, so Olaf and his company, when they were launched fairly on the storm, were not only incapable of proceeding, but actually made leeway. Soon, however, they mustered energy for the occasion, and sprang on against wind and rain. With a great deal of difficulty, they arrived at Leikner's house; but they had not in their journey perceived the vessel."

"You must have been mistaken," said Olaf.

"No," I was not mistaken, "replied Leikner; "but I fear the vessel is foundered."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Olaf.

As the rest of the party entered the doorway, Leikner said "I will return in a moment; I will give another look for the ship."

He went towards the edge of the cliff, and saw the object of his solicitude below, not far from the shore; then turning back, he ran in, exclaiming, “Now, now! the vessel is below—it is stranded!”

All rushed out of the dwelling, Leikner leading the way, and went down a steep pathway towards the beach. On leaving the house, Olaf had prudently desired Gudby to get some bedding in order; “for,” said he, “some poor creature may be washed on shore.”

The moon was now shedding a glimmering light, which faintly flashed on the boisterous waters; and, as the party were descending, they beheld the vessel, at a little distance, grounded on a sand-bank or ledge of rocks, with the sea breaking fearfully over it. The wind was so tempestuous, that the adventurers were frequently driven against the sides of the cliff; and Olaf had a narrow escape from being swept away; for he was dashed against a rock, and then, half stunned, was about to be whirled over, when Ribolt, who was holding firmly by a projecting mass, grasped him and saved his

life. When they reached the beach, the vessel was found to be in the same situation as before. It must have been firmly wedged among rocks, for, although it was exposed to the fury of the sea, it did not move; and sometimes the waves ran so high that nothing could be seen but the masts.

"Is there any one on board?" inquired Olaf.

"Two on the bowsprit," said Leikner.

"I see two or three on the foremast," said Ribolt.

"Poor dear fellows!" exclaimed Olaf; "they ——."

At that moment the vessel lurched. "Oh, oh!" the spectators cried, as she rolled away, and the masts, with a crash which was just heard above the thundering wind, went over her side. But she soon righted; and now again she was afloat.

Nothing more was seen of the masts. The hull was riding on the waves, which rolled along like moving hills; sometimes it was lifted almost out of the waters, on the very summit of a billow; and then it seemed lost for ever.

After a painful, an almost breathless pause, in which the hands of all were involuntarily raised, for the vessel had not been seen, and was supposed to be gone indeed, she was observed — a huge dark mass — riding on the billows ; and, as the bowsprit passed across the infant moon, a man was descried on it. A pause of deep anxiety succeeded, in which no one dared to move or speak, as if a change of position, or a single sound, would disorder the course of the wreck, and endanger the life of the seaman. At this moment, as a huge wave curled to dash on the shore, a man was seen falling in the dark shining waters. He came with considerable force on the ground, and all rushed to the spot in order to save him, but he was carried away by the under current. In a few moments he was seen again, and seized by Wigfer, who carried him back ; but he was apparently dead.

Something else — some dark object — was discovered, struggling apparently with the waters, not far from Olaf ; but it was swept into the deeps, and seen no more.

All eyes were now directed to the wreck,

which was approaching. A mountainous wave rolled it on, and it seemed ready to crush down on the spectators, who ran back, when another wave caught it, as it were, from the tired wave, and swept it with a thundering crash on the rocky shore. For a moment all were paralised; even the sea, in Olaf's opinion (though it was, as he confessed, a mere fancy), seemed startled at the mischief it had done. There was a momentary pause, broken only by the splashing and hissing of the foam, and then the waters were covered with the fragments of the wreck.

“Where is the man?” exclaimed all, as they rushed to the spot.

“He is gone, he is gone!” cried Olaf, almost distracted.

“No! no!” exclaimed Grimson, “Here—here he is.”

The poor fellow had been flung from the bowsprit to a considerable distance beyond the waves, where he was lying senseless. He was taken up, and put by the side of his shipmate.

Wigfer had been left with the first body. "I am afraid," said he, "this poor fellow is dead."

"We must carry both," said Olaf, "to the house. With care, and the blessing of God, I hope they will recover. We shall have difficult work to get them up; but we must try what we can do."

They waited a few minutes to see if any other bodies were thrown on shore, and then began their toilsome ascent. The second man revived, and walked a little; but the other was carried the whole of the way. When they arrived at Leikner's dwelling, two beds were ready, into one of which the senseless seaman was put, and his companion was helped into the other. The latter drank some warm whey, but was much exhausted, and said little. With all the care and exertion that were used about the other, no signs of life could be produced.

"Let us," said Olaf, "descend once more to the beach; for if I go home without revisiting it, I shall have no rest; I shall fancy that some

poor creature is there perishing. Wigfer and Grimson accompanied their master, but saw nothing besides pieces of wreck, which had been left on the rocks. The storm was now somewhat abated.

When Olaf returned to Leikner's house, he requested that the bed with the senseless man should be put near the fire ; but, alas ! he soon perceived that the poor fellow was dead. Tears trickled down his face as he looked on those pallid cheeks. The eyes were still unclosed, and the whole of the countenance was wrought into the expression of mental energy ; perhaps the very expression which had accompanied his last effort to save himself. " Ah ! " said Olaf, " some wife and perhaps affectionate children must hear of this event. At this very moment, probably, the partner of this poor fellow is looking at the angry sky, and thinking of the stormy sea ; or lying wakeful and full of anxiety. Dreadful will be the news which will convince her she is a widow. Oh ! I can imagine the look of agony, the shriek, the fit of insensibility, the return of consciousness, the groans and

lamentations, the frantic embracing of the fatherless children, the cries and prayers to Heaven ! Poor woman ! may God support her under her affliction ! ”

Olaf turned away, and, with a sorrowful heart, set out with his son and the two men for his dwelling. He found the household full of anxiety, but this was immediately exchanged for deep interest in the fate of the deceased sailor, and the man who was, in all probability, in a fair way of recovery. After Olaf had given a touching account of the awful scenes which he had witnessed, Thorna said, “ It is probable that one life at least, will be the reward of your exertion; for without immediate assistance there is no doubt but the poor fellow would have perished.”

“ There is no pleasure so great,” observed Galmina ; “ none so pure and permanent as that of doing good.”

“ Yes,” replied Olaf, “ I suppose that is true. We must always remember, however, that this, as well as every other pleasure, is derived from

the Great Benefactor of mankind. — He is the source of every good."

" Your opinion," observed Sira Gudmerson, " is correct. He gives the power, and gives directly or indirectly the inclination to use it. Benevolence is a native of heaven ; — It came forth, if I may use the expression, dressed in unsullied purity and beauty, on the morn of its existence, when God determined to create intelligent beings ; — when he willed that others besides himself should be happy. And what a wondrous thing it was to bring into existence the first intelligent creature ! — The second in the universe capable of thinking and acting. Benevolence in the Deity is free from selfishness ; but in man it is mixed with alloy. Much, however, of what is current as benevolence, is narrow selfishness. Oh ! I dislike the doctrine which ministers even of our own church have taught, that man acts kindly, mercifully, and christianly, only because he studies his own interest, — he pays it as a price for his own happiness ; but this is low and degrading to human nature. If a man feeds

the hungry, or clothes the naked, or supports the feeble, or risks his life in order to save a fellow creature from a watery grave, shall he do it only because of what he may gain? Is selfishness the first, the middle, and the last motive? Or rather, does he not, as it were, draw out the case parallel with an imagined one, in which he himself is the sufferer; and because certain things would be desirable for him, he thinks they would be for another; and without delay, unless to inquire, ‘Can I impart the help?’ he runs forward — not creeps or walks, — and with a willing heart bestows it. Oh! surely, if there were no increase of happiness in this life or the next, as the consequence of benevolence, a well-regulated mind would — if it were only for the sake of consistency and propriety, feel desirous of lessening the sufferings of his fellow creatures.

“ There is, however, a present as well as future reward for Christian conduct; but the selfish man looks at the reward only. Here we see the difference between the truly benevolent and the pretendedly so. One con-

templates the good of others first; the other looks at self first. The former, as I have observed, would act benevolently without the reward; the latter, if possible, would receive the reward without acting benevolently. In the former, the whole world is the sphere of his vision and sympathy; in the latter, self is the centre of his hopes and fears. Oh! I dislike to contemplate that cool, calculating method which weighs out benevolence (so called), by a corresponding income of probable gain; but I delight to see it arising spontaneously—‘Here is distress, let it be relieved!’ If the latter feeling prevailed, benevolent deeds would be much more common than if all men acted on a contrary principle. Let us then approve the method which brings forth good fruit, and which brings forth much fruit. First other men, secondly self, ought to be the rule in performing kind actions; but too frequently it is first self, secondly others. In one case, self is, in some respects, a voluntary sacrifice to benevolence; in the other, good actions are offered up in honour of self—self is

the altar, and the idol, and the temple, and the world, and the universe — self is all in all ! ”

After a few remarks from the rest of the company, Sira Gudmerson said, “ There is something poetic in benevolence. It causes a man to disrobe himself of self, and to put on, in imagination, the nature of another; and to inquire, ‘ How should I feel if I were in his condition ? ’ Benevolence is a transfer of personality from one to another — a transfer of interest and feeling ; so that a man lives in that other, and endeavours to benefit that other, and, forgetting himself for a time, wishes and prays for blessings to descend upon him.”

“ It reconciles us,” said Thorna, “ in some degree, to the afflictions of life, when we remember that benevolence, forbearance, love, and many other excellent qualities are by these means brought into action.”

“ Your remark is just,” observed the clergyman. “ The very shades of human experience are the occasion of light and beauty. In nature, light is the cause of shade, but it is only in morals that shades are the cause of

light. An uniform state of being, with our present faculties, would be dull and tedious. Who knows but that the Divine Governor, in varying our wants, our possessions, and our feelings, may have bestowed upon us an important blessing?"

"I believe," said Olaf, "however much we may be tempted in our dark hours to doubt it, that 'the tender mercies of God are over all his works.' Many of our trials, and all our blessings are from him. Although the dispensations of the Divine Being vary, yet perhaps, every one, directly or indirectly, either in our own imperfect vision or that of a more perfect kind, would be found encircled with benevolence."

"Without doubt," added Thorna—her eyes sparkling with interest in the subject,—"the goodness of the Deity extends to all countries, whether they be lighted up with the glow of a burning sun, or buried in shades of almost perpetual night;—whether they be furnished with luxuries, or exposed to poverty;—whether the inhabitants worship the true God, or grope

their way in darkness, in search of him of whom even their wise men (comparatively speaking), have scarcely heard."

"There is no doubt," observed Sira Gudmerson, "that the benevolence of the Deity is universal. It is like the arch of the heavens. We fancy we perceive the termination of the arch, but we go onward and it remains unchanged. We may travel into distant lands, or circuit the globe, but the heavenly arch—the emblem of Divine government and mercy,—is always present."

"Yes," said Thorna, "the arch is unchanged, but the heavens exhibit a different aspect in different places."

"True," replied the clergyman; "and this is still further illustrative of divine and human things. In one part, a cluster of stars sparkles in the depths of space, and in another part another cluster, but all bestow light; and thus the Deity varies in his dispensations. The base of the heavenly vault, or the horizon, varies also, but not more than the opinions and customs of men."

Shortly after these conversations, the family retired to rest. On the next morning, Gudbrand, Sira Gudmerson, and Olaf went down to Leikner's dwelling. The weather was calm, and in comparison with what it had been, beautiful.

“ It is with nature as with men,” said the clergyman; “ smiles and tranquillity succeed gloom and agitation. This morning is the more lovely because of the recent storms; and I have frequently thought that the smile of a dark-minded man, when it proceeds from a momentary overflow of pleasure, is more delightful and more highly valued than the smile of one habitually cheerful.”

“ Yes,” observed Olaf, “ things in themselves good, are perhaps valued according to their rarity. Water is good; but we have, thank God! an abundance of it, and hence we do not feel its value; but I well remember once, when I was on a cruise, and becalmed for two or three days, and our stock of water was exhausted, how I was tantalised at beholding the Snorra, several miles distant,

bursting over the precipices and falling in a mighty mass — enough to quench the thirst of tens of thousands, and mingling with the briny waters. I even envied the craggy rocks through which it bursted, and could scarcely help exclaiming, ‘ why is this delicacy bestowed on what cannot enjoy it ? Oh ! why is this waste of water, while I am perishing ? ’ We, certainly, value excellencies agreeably with their scarcity ; and thus, in respect of good qualities, humble conduct in a proud man, or a sparkling of wisdom in the mind of a fool, is valued highly because of its novelty.”

“ In most cases,” observed Sira Gudmerson, “ we may conclude that rare things are prized, and that whatever is prized is rare. A fool values his thoughts, because they are few ; hence a fool is frequently conceited, and a conceited man is a fool.”

“ One thought,” said Olaf, “ suggests another, and sometimes what appears to have little connection with it ; thus the question suggested to me is, ‘ What is the difference

between conceit and pride; or, indeed, is there any difference except in degree?"

"Conceit and pride," observed Sira Gudmerson, "instead of being similar, are very dissimilar. Conceit is confidence, pride is timidity. The former is a high opinion of self, and a conviction that others judge of us in the same manner; the latter is a fear lest others think more lowly of us than we wish. Conceit disregards the defects of self, and is careless of those of others: pride is conscious of deficiencies, which it wishes to hide, and strict in detecting the faults of others as an excuse for its own. Conceit loves society, pride loves solitude: the inclinations of the former lead to its cure, those of the latter to its increase."

"The sea is now," he continued, "spread before us in all its glory, sparkling and glistening like an ocean of light."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Olaf, "how tranquil it is in comparison with what it was last night. There is a heavy, thundering surf on the shore, but the main body of the waters is tolerably

smooth. I hope the poor fellow saved from the wreck is doing well."

Just then, they arrived at the dwelling, when Olaf entered, followed by Gudbrand. The young man, to whom they had referred, was sitting by the fire.

"This is he, I suppose," said Gudbrand to his companion.

Olaf replied in the affirmative, and began to address the stranger. As the latter lifted his head, Gudbrand exclaimed, "Good God ! who is that ?" and suddenly became dizzy and faint, so that he leant against the wall to preserve himself from falling. The stranger was powerfully affected ; but, recovering himself a little, arose, threw his arms around the old man's neck, and wept like a child. Olaf involuntarily lifted his hands in astonishment.

"My dear boy !" exclaimed Gudbrand, after tears had loosened the fetters of his tongue, "How came you here ?"

"I have been preserved from a watery grave by the mercy of God and the kindness of my

countrymen. But I have had much trouble to pass through lately."

"And so have I," said the old man, with a sigh; "but sit down, my dear boy; a merciful Providence, I hope, will help us out of our difficulties."

"I hope you have had no sorrows," replied Marfrede. "All your family, I hope, is well."

The anxious and significant manner in which this was spoken, disclosed the feelings of Marfrede, and awoke remembrances of no pleasing kind in Gudbrand.

"Thorna is well," he replied, willing to relieve him from anxiety; but, at the same moment, a cloud seemed to pass over the mind and darken the countenance of the speaker. Indeed the minds of both were similarly affected. Gudbrand remembered the connection which had existed between Thord and Thorna,—the preparation and all but consummation of the wedding,—brought about by the neglect and disgraceful conduct of Marfrede; while the youth, on the other hand, remembered the inattention of the maiden

whom he ardently loved, and to whom he had frequently written without receiving an answer. It seemed almost unnatural, but the joy of both was suddenly followed by a painful and repulsive feeling. After a pause of a few moments, Gudbrand sighed deeply, and, as if influenced by a sudden thought, arose and said, as he passed towards the adjoining room, “ We shall have time enough for explaining every thing.”

Marfrede was overwhelmed with conflicting feelings. Gudbrand and himself were in a similar predicament. Each imagined himself to have been ill-treated; but, as it is frequently with those who judge harshly of others, there was no blame on either side. If all the *fancied* insult and neglect in the world were reduced to what is actually such, the amount would be comparatively small.

Soon after Gudbrand had joined Olaf in the inner room, where the corpse was lying, Sir Gudmerson entered the dwelling, where he saw Marfrede sitting with his head resting on his hand, and apparently much dejected. The

clergyman recognised him as some one that he had previously seen, and going towards him exclaimed, "What!" and then instantly recollecting him, "Is this Marfrede Bergman?" The youth was so much affected that he burst into tears. The kind pastor sat down by the side of his young friend, and began to bless God for having preserved him from a watery grave.

"I am," said Marfrede, when his agitation was subsided, "very thankful for your kindness; but I feel myself miserable."

"How? why so, my dear boy?" inquired Sira Gudmerson.

Marfrede's heart was too full for utterance — he scarcely knew how to express his feelings; at last, he told the clergyman that although his meeting with Gudbrand Magnusson was very pleasing at first, it became very painful.

"You will be able, probably," said his counsellor and friend, "to explain every thing, and to exculpate yourself from blame."

"From blame! How?" exclaimed Marfrede. "I am not blameable: I have done

nothing to occasion it; but, really, I think I have been" — Here the youth seemed unwilling to trust himself with the expression of his feelings.

"Wipe away your tears, my dear boy," said Sira Gudmerson: "the path of life is sometimes rough, but not always so. We must hope, and put our trust in our Heavenly Father."

"What brought you into this part?" inquired Marfrede.

"Have you not heard what has happened at Sida?"

"No."

The clergyman now began to relate, as cautiously as possible, the events which had occurred in his parish; but he had not proceeded far, when Marfrede eagerly inquired, "Where was my father? Where is he now? Where is my uncle?"

"I know not where your uncle is."

"Where is my father then?" inquired Marfrede, with much anxiety.

Sira Gudmerson made no reply; but tears

started in his eyes, and he covered his face to hide his emotions. The poor youth required no clearer communication of the painful intelligence. "My father! Oh, my dear father!" he exclaimed. He arose and paced the room, and leaned his head against the wall in the bitterest distress. "Oh! that I had not lived!" he cried. "Better — far better if I had perished in the waters! Without my father — Oh! I am indeed wretched — forlorn."

With many similar expressions he indicated the depth of his feelings; but when he became tranquillised a little, he felt sorry for having indulged in murmurings against Providence. Nothing, perhaps, so completely brings a reflecting man to the path of reason as the consciousness of having transgressed. Previously, he imagined that others were aggressors, and in this respect debtors to him; now the tables are turned — he is the transgressor, and is bound to make advances, humbly and repentantly, in order to compensate for his conduct. Previously, the balance of blame was supposed to be on the side of another;

now it is on his own side — he can condemn no one but himself. So that the man, who rushes into anger or revenge, is eager to make himself a debtor instead of a creditor. Marfrede was become humble and penitent, and evinced a considerable degree of resignation to the will of Heaven, while Sira Gudmerson answered the questions which were put by the orphan respecting the latter days of his parent.

It has not yet been mentioned, that it was in the meadows near Sida, soon after the death of Gunlöd Magnusson, that Ianfried Bergman, aged fifty-eight years, died, and was buried.

“ Man is, indeed,” exclaimed poor Marfrede, after a pause, “ born to trouble. I think I have had a great deal to experience lately. Can you tell me nothing of a less gloomy kind? Where is Thorna? Her father said she was well; but where she is, or why she has neglected me, I know not.”

“ My dear lad,” replied Sira Gudmerson, “ if it be any source of gratification to you, I can inform you that she is at Loftafell.”

“At Loftafell!” exclaimed Marfrede. “Is she there alone?—or, at least, with her father?”

“Thorna,” said the clergyman, perceiving the indirect bearing of his question, “is still Thorna Magnusson; but——”

“But, what?” inquired Marfrede, anxiously.

“You know,” replied his companion, who feared to distress the poor fellow by alluding to Thord, “there has been an unpleasant feeling between Gudbrand’s family and yourself. You will now be able to explain the whole.”

“I was not blameable,” said Marfrede.
“I ——”

“My dear lad,” said Sira Gudmerson, “you shall be introduced to Thorna and her father; and then you will be able to explain the whole affair. For my part, I know little about it. Besides, I think that an explanation, if sincere, is better without than with a previous conversation on the subject; for if you were to talk over the matter with me, and convince me, you would feel it less necessary to pay attention

to minute particulars in explaining the subject a second time. If I can, I will procure you an opportunity of pleading your cause to-day."

"I am much obliged to you," said Marfeda, his eyes brightening with gratitude and joy; "but there is a great deal of mystery in this affair."

While Sira Gudmerson and his companion were conversing, Olaf and Gudbrand passed through the room. They waited a short time on the cliff, and then walked slowly towards Loftafell, but were not overtaken by their friend.

About an hour after, Sira Gudmerson, fatigued with his hurried walk, came almost breathless into the room. "I had no idea it was so late," said he; "I must have been three hours at least with that poor fellow."

"Don't mention his name to Thorna," said Gudbrand; and then, after a pause, he added, "I really don't know how we shall manage this matter, for she will expect to hear some account of him. It is a very awkward affair; for Thord and Eggert are, I hope, alive; and

the former is engaged to Thorma. Marfrede was her accepted lover until he neglected the girl; and even now I know she is partial to him. It is true, she was incensed at his conduct; but if she had not loved him, she would not have thought so much about it. What to do I know not."

"Perhaps, it would be better," said Olaf, "for the subject to be gradually introduced after dinner; and then, if you think proper, you can explain the whole affair to your daughter."

"Do you think it would be right to invite Marfrede here this evening?" inquired Sira Gudmerson.

"On no account," said Gudbrand. "We will see nothing of him yet."

"The lad says he is not blameable in the affair," replied the clergyman.

"It will be difficult to believe him," said Gudbrand, "unless he tells a very different story from what I expect to hear. My opinion is that he is very blameable."

It was agreed that Gudbrand himself should undertake the office of preparing Thorna's mind for the news of Marfrede's arrival.

"I will give Leikner instructions," said Olaf, "to pay every attention to his guest."

CHAP. XXX.

THE day on which Marfrede was recognised by his friends, was to him a day of great suspense, for he was continually expecting an invitation to Loftafell, but none arrived. As soon as night closed in, his anxiety ceased, for he knew that he should receive no message before the morning ; and with Leikner and Gudby he spent the evening pleasantly.

Let us now turn our attention to the visitors at the higher farm. As soon as Thorna and Galmina entered the room, the former began to inquire of her father whether or not the men were recovered.

“ One, my dear,” replied Gudbrand, “ is well. The other, as our friend Olaf expected, did not recover.”

“ Poor fellow ! ” exclaimed Thorna ; “ I am

grieved at his death. I am happy, however, that one is restored; and our friend Olaf must be much gratified in the reflection of having saved him. Father, who is he?"

Gudbrand was determined to act agreeably with his commission, and to keep Thorna, for the present, in ignorance of Marfrede. He replied, "I did not ask his name."

"Is he an Iceland-man?"

"I should think he must be."

"But, father," said Thorna, "it is strange you did not ask his name, or his country; for that is the first thing I should have asked."

"My dear," replied her father, "I said but little to him; and then I went into the room where the corpse of the dead seaman was lying."

"Is he a young man?"

"Yes, I think, rather young."

"Is he the son, or any relation of the dead man?" inquired Galmina, who fancied that pretty much ignorance existed respecting a person whom several had set out to see, and become acquainted with.

"I do not think, my dear," replied Gudbrand, "that he is a relative of the deceased."

"Now, father," said Thorna, "you know that our sex are inquisitive. You went down to Leikner's house for the purpose of learning the history of this poor fellow, and now we are anxious to learn it of you."

Very fortunately the announcement of dinner closed the conversation; but the dinner was scarcely over when the subject was again introduced. Gudbrand now was not so desirous as he had been of keeping the secret; but he was anxious that, if disclosed, it should be done gradually.

"Father," said Thorna, "you did not say whether the young man was tall or otherwise. Is he tall?"

"I think not. He is, I believe, of a moderate height."

"Do you not know," she inquired, "whether he is a Dane, or a Swede, or a native of this country?"

"He belongs, I believe, to Iceland."

"I should like to know," said Galmina, "to

what place he belongs. We will, I think," she continued, addressing herself to Thorna and Malvina, "go down and see him to-morrow. But, Sira Gudmerson, perhaps you saw more of him."

The clergyman said nothing. "Yes, I dare say that you," added Thorna, addressing herself to him, "can give us some information of the stranger."

"My dear, your father will satisfy your inquiries," replied the clergyman.

"No, he cannot," said Thorna. "How long were you with him?"

"Please to ask your father."

"Really, this is strange!" exclaimed Thorna; "that there should be three visitors, and only one speaker. Sira Gudmerson, you must tell us what you know of the young man. Father, may he not?"

"It seems very mysterious," observed Galmina, "that Sira Gudmerson must obtain your father's leave to speak about the youth."

As the word *youth* was spoken, Thorna seemed to have a strange suspicion of something, which

made her very pale. It did not, however, prevent her from saying, "Now, father, if leave must be granted, please to allow Sira Gudmerson to answer our questions. Or, perhaps, our good friend Olaf will give us the information without further trouble."

"My dear Thorna," said Olaf, "I know nothing of him. He is quite a stranger to me."

"Then," said Galmina, with much quickness, "he is not a stranger to the rest."

"My dears," said Gudbrand — who would have been willing to turn the conversation into another track — for, with all his precaution, it was opening too rapidly — "I do not claim the right of interfering with any one. You may ask our friend any questions, and he will answer them, without —."

Thorna was become suspicious, agitated, and impatient. "Father," said she, "is it any one I know?"

Gudbrand was taken so suddenly, that he knew not what to say, "That — that you know, my child?" he rejoined, with some trepidation.

"O, father!" exclaimed Thorna, "do not keep me in suspense. Is it ——."

Thorna's searching look penetrated her father's soul, and she discovered the whole mystery before she could conclude the sentence.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "'tis Mar——," and sunk on the floor.

Galmina had not been so penetrating as Thorna — she had not suspected who it was. Indeed she had never seen Marfrede, but had merely heard that he had been a suitor of Thorna, and, for neglectful conduct, discarded. She remembered that Thord had been almost united to the Sida maiden, and she was encouraged to hope that he was still alive. Thorna, she knew, loved Marfrede; and a meeting, she reflected, might lead to an explanation, an explanation to a reconciliation, and a reconciliation to the establishment of Marfrede in the place of her brother. These thoughts intruded themselves suddenly, and agitated her so much that, instead of attending to the invalid, who was now raised from the floor, she was obliged to sit down in order to preserve herself from swooning.

The maiden, however, who was most interested in Marfrede, was still senseless. She was conveyed to her bed, where she became somewhat better; but was still much agitated, and continued so throughout the night. The whole of the inmates of Loftafell were much affected by the unexpected appearance of the youth; and perhaps affected the more, because circumstances latterly had been monotonous, and now a little ruffling of the aspect of affairs, by the storm and the return of Marfrede, occasioned considerable excitement.

CHAP. XXXI.

ON the next morning, immediately after breakfast, a consultation was held by the household at Loftafell, respecting the discovery which had engaged their attention on the previous day. All were present. Thorna was pale and agitated; Gudbrand was much depressed; and all were gloomy.

“What can be done,” inquired Gudbrand, “in regard to this singular matter?”

After a pause, Thorna—heaving a deep sigh, and summoning as much firmness as her shattered nerves would allow—said, “It is a distressing affair—distressing for you and me. Really, I do not see what can be done. It is, under existing circumstances, most unfortunate that Marfrede should have come into this part; and, under any circumstances, it would have been unfortunate, considering his conduct. He

has, I believe, justly forfeited my esteem ; and hence there will be no occasion for me to see him." Then, endeavouring to restrain her emotions, she added, but with considerable trepidation, " The engagement, of course, that I am under, prevents me from receiving him. No, I cannot — I cannot. Thord and Eggert are probably alive. Poor, dear Eggert ! God grant that — — "

" Of course," observed Galmina, " if the poor fellows are still living — (and I trust a merciful Providence will restore them !) — if Thord should return — — "

" Why then, of course," said Thorna, interrupting her friend, " I am bound to fulfil my engagement. Marfrede, I am well aware, acted shamefully ; hence I transferred my regard from him to Thord. Thord has always acted kindly, and I am laid under great obligations to him. When I think of Marfrede's conduct it seems inexplicable — it was shameful. The more I reflect on it, the more unkind, ungenerous, and unfeeling it appears. I do not wish to see him. No ; you can befriend him, and contribute to

his comfort ; but he has separated himself from me — he has broken the chain which once, I fondly thought, was indissoluble ! ”

Thorna’s feelings would scarcely allow her to finish the sentence.

“ It would be just,” said Sir Gudmerson, “ before the matter is settled, to see Marfrede, and to make inquiries of him respecting his conduct.”

“ I do not think it necessary,” replied Gudbrand. “ He broke the connection with Thorna, and he must bear the consequence of it. Besides, he could invent a tale to acquit himself, and who could contradict him ? ”

“ My dear friend ! ” said the clergyman, “ that remark seems harsh in comparison with your usually kind and gentle manner.”

“ Trouble,” replied the honest-hearted old man, “ sometimes sours the temper. I confess I am not so cheerful — so void of care, and I may say of suspicion — as I used to be : a gloomy instead of a pleasing prospect is continually before me — darkness instead of brightness gathers around me. I wish to be just with

the lad, but I fear he has acted dishonourably ; and if he has done so, he will probably do so again : he will fabricate a story, and no one will be able to confute him."

" I do not think he would endeavour to deceive," replied Thorna.

" My dear girl !" exclaimed Malvina, " how can you think so, and yet fancy that he deceived you, by violating his professions of attachment and constancy ! "

" I know not how it was," replied the maiden. " I have said that his conduct is inexplicable; and yet, I do not think he would act dishonourably. However," she added, with deep, but stifled regret, " the matter is fixed ; and even if Marfrede could explain his conduct, it would be useless. Thord — Thord has acted in the most open and honourable manner ; and I am — I am bound, and will do so — I will act in the same manner towards him."

" Yes," said Galmina, eager to favour her brother's cause, without appearing to be officious, " it is not as if the dear boy had won your regard, and formed an engagement, by any

means but what are fair and praiseworthy; for otherwise, I would not, though I love him much, endeavour to support his cause — one on which, I know, his happiness, provided God has preserved him, depends."

"If," said Olaf, "our young friend's brother has acted honourably with Thorna, there is no reason why there should not be a similar return. And, indeed, I know I have no occasion to suggest this, for a noble mind will act honourably intuitively — it needs not the aid of persuasion. But if, on the other hand, he or any other have over-reached or deceived her, the contract made under false pretences is not binding."

"Thord," said Thorna, "has acted honourably — I have not the least reason to doubt it. He could not have prevented Marfrede from writing to me — of course he could not. I need no arguments to persuade me that, if Thord be living, I am bound to him."

"I think, however," remarked Sira Gudmerson, "that my friends Gudbrand and Olaf, with myself, will call on Marfrede, and talk with him. If we find he has acted improperly,

we will inform him that no further attention will be received from him."

"And even if he has not"—observed Galmina.

"Why," said Thorna, exhibiting something like impatience, as if inclination were suffering martyrdom for the cause of principle,—"even if he has not, why then, of course, we can only regret.—Certainly, it is now too late." Then rallying her sinking spirits, she added, "I am fully engaged to Thord; and I will not be outdone by him in honourable conduct."

"Would it be better to invite Marfrede to Loftafell to-day?" inquired Olaf.

"By no means," replied Gudbrand.

"No, I think not," said Thorna.

"Shall we then," inquired Olaf, "call on him to-day?"

To this proposal the rest agreed, and soon set off for Leikner's dwelling.

CHAP. XXXII.

WHEN Olaf and his friends went down to the lower farm, Leikner and Marfrede were on the shore collecting fragments of the vessel. As soon as the latter came to the house, Sira Gudmerson said, " My dear young friend, I promised I would procure you an interview with your old neighbours ; but, as some of the inmates at Loftafell are unwell, we thought it better to pay you a visit this morning. If, as you assured me, you can exculpate yourself from blame in the late unpleasant affair, do so : our good friend here, who has fancied himself and daughter aggrieved, will, I have no doubt, in that case, extend to you the hand of friendship ; but if you have been faulty, confess it, and I have no doubt he will forgive you."

" I was extremely surprised, yesterday," said Marfrede, " when you mentioned the an-

pitions which were entertained respecting me; and I cannot listen to a repetition of them without pain. I have, I assure you, imagined myself cruelly slighted; for I wrote three times to Thorna, and although I entreated her to send an answer, I received none."

"Wrote three times!" exclaimed Gudbrand. "Why, surely you forget. Thorna has never received a letter from you."

"Never received a letter!" said Marfrede, in great astonishment. "I sent one as soon as I arrived in Copenhagen; another about two months after; and a third in the beginning of this summer. And not one of them arrived! It is almost incredible."

"It may be so," replied Gudbrand; "but it is more probable that you have forgotten, and did not write three times; or, if you wrote, forgot to send the letters."

"I really did send them. I sent two letters also to my dear father, and received one from him. He informed me that Thorna was well; and this was all I heard of her."

"Some accident must have prevented the

arrival of the letters," said Olaf; "perhaps, shipwreck. I have no doubt," he added, addressing himself to Marfrede, "that you will act candidly and honourably with us."

"I solemnly declare," he replied, "and being under great obligations to you, I would not, in the slightest degree — if I had no other motive — endeavour to deceive you: the account which I have given is correct. I sent three letters, but have not received one. You must be aware that this could not have been otherwise than painful to me; but it is still more so, when I find myself not relieved of my mental suffering — not compensated by the unravelling of the cruel mystery — not soothed, but censured." After a pause of a few moments, he continued, "I knew that Thorna could not act unkindly or ungenerously, but I could not account for the long, the distressing silence. Oh ! if I had not sincerely loved her, I should not have been so unhappy at her apparent neglect. I cannot — I really cannot express — Here, the remembrance of his feelings affected him greatly.

“ Well, well,” said Gudbrand, “ I hope, I think you are sincere; for no one would, under such circumstances, endeavour to deceive. To the mysterious dispensations of Providence, or rather to his allowance of painful and perplexing events for the trial of our faith and constancy, we must refer these occurrences, which, I assure you, have brought great pain on Thorna as well as myself; and I fear, if you are still attached to my daughter, have encompassed you with sorrow.”

“ How? In what way?” exclaimed the distracted youth. “ I thought — indeed, you told me,” addressing himself to Sira Gudmerson, “ that Thorna was still free.”

“ My dear lad,” replied the clergyman, “ I said that Thorna is free in one respect — she is unmarried.”

“ And if so,” exclaimed Marfrede, “ and I have done nothing to offend her, what have I to fear? — unless she have — and that,” he added, clasping his hands, and lifting his eyes to Heaven, “ God forbid! — transferred her regard to another.”

“ Do not, my dear boy,” said Sira Gadmerson, “ distress yourself. We know not that he, who paid some attention to Thorna, is living.”

“ Then she has had another suitor ! ” exclaimed Marfrede, his pallid countenance and quivering lip evincing the agony of his soul; “ I cannot bear the thought ! Another ! Oh, it is cruel ! — It seems so. Why Thorna and myself were united from our earliest days ; for in our infancy we plighted our vows, and confirmed them as we advanced in years, and when we parted — Oh ! it has been a dreadful parting — we renewed our pledges in the presence of Heaven and the eternal God ; and now she has broken her vows, and given her regards to another ! Oh, no ; it cannot be ! — ”

“ She was,” replied her father, “ sadly grieved at what she believed to be your cruel and neglectful conduct ; for she had received no letter from you ; and, in addition, was informed that you were indifferent respecting her, that your attentions were given to another, and that you had spoken degradingly of her.”

hence she became reckless of earthly enjoyment, and almost desirous that, what she believed you had despised—her regard and love—you might never possess; and thus, in a fit of bewilderment and desperation, she yielded to the solicitations of a youth, Thord Thordalston, who ardently loved, and was very attentive to her; but the earthquake and the volcanic eruption prevented the consummation of the nuptials."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Marfrede; "I thank thee for interposing." And then, reflecting for a moment, he added, "But I would not rejoice in those calamities—in desolation, in suffering, and in death! These, however, come in the order of Providence; and so indeed do all our sorrows. I am not very old, but I have had much to suffer. Where is Thorna now? Where is Thord? Oh! it cannot be—she cannot, she must not become the beloved of another! I have," he added, weeping, "lost my home, my father, my friends!—these are heavy losses; but I cannot, Oh, I cannot lose Thorna; this is heavier than all!" After

a few moments, he added, "As it regards speaking against her, or neglecting her, nothing was further from my thoughts; and my continual grief was that I could not hear from her. I have not, in any instance, done or even thought any thing which could offend her or her friends; and it is hard that, without fault on my part, I should be cast off, and forsaken."

"Do not distress yourself," said Sira Gudmerson; "we know not what a merciful Providence may bring about."

"I cannot, in that respect, counsel you to hope," said Gudbrand, taking the youth by the hand, while the tears started in his eyes; "but I assure you, my esteem for you is revived; and I am sorry, very sorry for what has happened. There is, however, no striving with, or opposing the course of Providence. We must, my dear boy, bend to superior wisdom, and we shall, I am sure, consider you as a friend."

The visitors were now rising to depart.

"Shall I," said Marfrede, "be allowed to see Thorna?"

“ Why,” replied Gudbrand, “ I scarcely know what to say.”

“ Perhaps,” observed Sira Gudmerson, “ it would be no harm for him to see her.”

“ I should think not,” added Olaf.

“ If Thorna wish it then,” replied Gudbrand, “ I will not object.”

“ Oh ! I hope—I think”—exclaimed Marfrede—“ I hope she will.”

Each one at parting, said something to comfort the youth, who was much distressed ; and those who left proceeded on their way with heavy hearts.

CHAP. XXXIII.

"How is the lad? What does he say?" inquired Malvina, as her husband entered the house.

"He is pretty well," replied Olaf. "I don't think the poor fellow is to be blamed."

"Really," added Gudbrand, as he came in and sat down; "I am sorry, very sorry for him. It is a mysterious affair. I cannot imagine how three letters should have been sent, and lost. However, it is possible. The lad, I believe, is sincere; and I hope he has not been made the dupe of designing persons."

Just at this moment, Thorna came in. "Well, father," said she; "you have, I suppose, seen him. Is he not — does he not seem ashamed of his conduct?"

"My dear girl," replied her father, "without doubt, some blame falls on Marfrede, but I

question whether he is so blamable as we supposed."

"But how — how can that be?" she inquired. "Is it not evident he might have acted differently?"

"He made me promise," observed Gudbrand, "that if you would allow him an interview, I would not object to it."

"My dear father," replied Thorna, "of what use would it be? I should gain little advantage from censuring him; indeed I feel no inclination to hurt his feelings. Poor fellow! he has had enough lately to try him — the loss of his parent, his property, and almost his life; and now he is destitute, and in some respects forsaken." Tears started in her eyes as she spoke these words, but she proceeded. "And if I were to discover that he has not been faulty — which, of course, could hardly be expected — although I would pray God to grant it, if only because I would rather that no stain should exist on a character which I always fancied fair. If he were not faulty, why then, father, you know it would be of little use —." After a pause, she added, "But, I

think I will see him. I will see him merely as a friend: and I will — I must — I will not be unfaithful to my engagements. I will always endeavour to view him in that light."

A neighbour now entered, who remained the greater part of the evening, and consequently put an end to the conversation. Thorna determined on seeing Marfrede the next morning; and, immediately after breakfast, Ribolt went down to Leikner's house, in order to escort the stranger to Loftafell. Marfrede had been furnished with some clothing from Ribolt's wardrobe, for the poor fellow possessed nothing more than what he had about him when he was thrown ashore. Two or three days' rest had improved his appearance, though he was pale and thin, but at all times he was an interesting-looking youth.

Thorna was much fluttered on that forenoon; she paced the room, walked in the open air, and sat down, but found no rest. "I am sorry that I engaged to see him to-day," she said to her friend Malvina. "I should like to see him; but oh! if circumstances were different — If

he could prove himself worthy of my confidence; and then, if I could bestow it on him!"

"It is, certainly," said Malvina, "an unfortunate affair."

"I shall meet him," she said, (in a tone which indicated something like desponding recklessness,) "or, I shall endeavour to do so, as one who has forfeited my esteem: but if he convinces me that he has acted honorably, why then, I shall assure him that, although painful events — I may say cruel events — have dissolved our connection, I shall continue to esteem him; and — —"

At this moment, Ribolt and Marfrede were heard in the court.

"Oh!" exclaimed Thorna, and sunk on a seat — her feelings overpowering her; but, in a moment, she arose and went into another room. Malvina stepped after her, and said, "My dear Thorna, will you see him now?"

"No, not immediately. I must compose myself a little. Let me see him, and no one else."

Malvina went out to welcome the stranger and her son. She congratulated the former on his providential escape as she introduced him to the room which Thorna had left. He looked about with an inquiring and anxious eye, as if expecting it to light on her from whom he had been so long separated. Malvina talked to him on various subjects, in order to engage his attention for a few minutes; but he seemed to answer mechanically, and sometimes his replies were anything but relevant to the questions. He scarcely dared to ask for Thorna; but he inquired if all in the house were well. The kind hostess begged him to take some wine, or milk, or some other refreshment; but he declined it. Finding that nothing would engage his attention, but that for which he had come, she stepped out for a moment, and then returning said, "I will do myself the pleasure of introducing you to an old friend."

Marfrede blushed deeply, and immediately became pale. "I am sorry," said Malvina, "that circumstances should have kept you and my friend so long apart; but I have no doubt,

you are free from blame : and integrity," she added, with a smile of encouragement, " will, sooner or later, receive its reward."

The heart of the listener was too full for utterance ; and he followed his fair conductress almost mechanically to the room in which Thorna was sitting, when, opening the door for Marfrede to enter, in strict compliance with the maiden's request, she retired, and closed it. Thorna had assumed a distant and rather dignified demeanour, such as is natural for injured beauty to assume. Marfrede's heart was full, and the moment the door was closed, without uttering a word, he burst into tears.

Thorna's proud feelings began to sink ; her assumed firmness to waver ; her affected sternness to soften ; and, in a few moments, she also was in tears. Former feelings — the remembrance of departed joys — the mysterious influence arising from a life of love — triumphed over every thing — they affectionately embraced each other !

The maiden had determined on seeing Marfrede for the purpose of questioning him, and

blaming him if she found him faulty; but all inquiries and reproaches were forgotten in the blissful experience of being again in each other's company. The clouds and shadows of life seemed to be dispelled, and the prospect, for a moment, to be decked with enchantment. Every thing was thought of, and talked of, but that for which the meeting was appointed. However, Thorna soon became conscious of her injudicious conduct, and in the same proportion, felt a bias in the contrary direction. "This will not do," she thought. "The chains which ought to have been broken are now, alas, more firmly rivetted."

She became very sad. At this moment, she thought, and the impression was so powerful that, almost unconsciously, she gave it utterance, "Why are we not as we were? Our feelings are the same! Oh! why—" Then, recollecting herself, and ashamed of her acknowledgment, she drew back from him, and resumed her originally cool and pain-exciting demeanour.

Marfrede, at first, was thunderstruck. Then he arose, and paced the room in agony; and

then, scarcely knowing what he did, threw himself at her feet, and wept bitterly. It was a distressing time for the maiden. What could she do? The secrets of his heart were open before her — his happiness, his life depended on her alone. He had been united to her from his infant days. — Could she break those tender, but powerful ties? Could she declare, what Marfrede dreaded, that she was the engaged, the unalienable property of another? She could not — she feared to do it; nor could she yield to any thing which would dissolve the engagement she had made with Thord — her honour, her religion forbade it. When Marfrede exclaimed, “ My beloved Thorna! — beloved from my earliest days — and never have I been faithless, or unmindful of you; but your presence was my joy, and your absence my deepest grief — Oh! do consent to calm my agitated soul. Tell me, what you have frequently given me some reason to hope, and to delight myself with, that in heart and soul we are one! That — ”

“ Oh! ” exclaimed Thorna, interrupting him, “ I cannot — I will not deceive you. I cannot

be yours ! No, I cannot ! I must tear myself from you, though it be with unspeakable agony — I must — there is a vow — a seal set on me — I am the property of another. Alas ! alas ! my fate is fixed ! ”

As Thorna raved thus madly, she sprang up, and Marfrede fell on the floor as dead. When opening the door, she turned and caught a glimpse of her lover on the ground. The first impulse was to clasp him in her arms ; and, if it pleased God, to breathe out her life with his. But she had scarcely begun to turn back, when a sudden impulse prompted her ; she rushed out of the room, and almost flying into the apartment where the household were sitting, gave a long and appalling shriek, and fell into the arms of her father.

He had been engaged in these studies, and enjoyed them, but he had not been able to find time to finish his work, and he had given up the idea of publishing it.

CHAP. XXXIV.

WHEN Thorna burst into the room, the company were dreadfully alarmed. All however gathered around her; and, in a few moments, she pointed to the door, and in a gasping hysterical voice, cried, "Marfrede!" Olaf and some others ran to see what was the matter, and found him lying on the ground, senseless. A considerable time elapsed before he could be restored, and then his mental anguish was so great as to melt those around him into tears.

Thorna now regretted that she had seen Marfrede; and during her excitation, declared she would "not see him again until ——" What this meant no one knew; but it referred, probably, to some beamings of hope, which, just then, flashed on her mind. However, she did not see him for a considerable period; and although Marfrede was sometimes invited to Loftafell, the maiden kept herself secluded.

Her engagement with Thord had been, unfortunately, premature; yet, as it was in some respect voluntary; and he, on his part, she imagined, had acted honourably; she was determined not to break it. Few can imagine the feelings which, like canker-worms, preyed on the minds of Marfrede and Thorna during this banishment from each other. It was intended that the former should continue for the winter with Leikner; but he felt so miserable at being almost in the presence of Thorna, and yet deprived of her company, that he determined, although it was late in the season, to set off for Reykiavick, at which place an uncle of his resided.

The weather now, owing to a prevalence of westerly winds, was comparatively mild; and there was but little snow on the ground. On a fine day in December, Marfrede, notwithstanding the remonstrance of his friends, departed for Reykiavick, and was accompanied by Ribolt as far as Hollt. Gudbrand sent letters by Marfrede, to a friend of his at the capital of Iceland. On the third day Ribolt

returned, bringing intelligence that the journey had been tolerably good; but the people, in almost all parts, were in great distress owing to a scarcity of pasture and provisions.

Poor Thorna was agitated by many conflicting feelings. She had been distressed at Marfrede's presence, and now she was distressed at his absence. Sometimes she felt confident that Thord was living; at other times, she concluded he was dead. She was determined, however, to act with the sternest honour, whatever sacrifice might be necessary; but continual mental excitement undermined her health—plucked the roses from her cheeks, making her countenance like monumental stone; dimmed the brightness of her eye and the sparkling buoyancy of her spirits.

Ribolt had scarcely returned a week, when there was a heavy fall of snow; indeed for two days it was incessant, and the inmates of Loftafell were almost entombed in it; they could go no where without cutting a lane through it. The greater part of the cattle, fortunately, was housed; but some of the poor

horses, which after a short time could find no grass, made their way back to the farm. As the winter seemed likely to be severe, Olaf and his friends calculated on spending two or three months almost insulated from the rest of the world.* They were now a little independent community, holding no intercourse with any but Leikner, and one or two neighbours. The great world, with its millions, was nothing to them ; they seemed like the original, or if not the original, the only inhabitants of the earth. It was, perhaps, fortunate for the inmates of Loftafell that they were thus secluded ; for there was a great deal of distress at this time in many parts of Iceland ; and Olaf, if he had heard of poverty, would have endeavoured to relieve it : but, probably, he would have gone further than he ought ; for his means were scanty, and he had several new dependants on his resources.

* "In general, no Icelander undertakes a journey of greater length the whole winter, than to his parish church ; and it often happens, though never without reluctance, that he must abandon even this tour for weeks together."

—*Henderson's Travels*, p. 278.

If, on the other hand, he and his friends had been acquainted with the general distress, and unable to relieve it, they would have been very unhappy ; as it was they were tranquil. Good old Gudbrand, it is true, had two or three sources of unhappiness ; the loss of his wife and daughter, the absence of Eggert, and the wreck of his property. Thorna had an additional source of distress in the painful situation of Marfrede and herself. Sira Gudmerson was anxious on several accounts ; for his future prospects, like those of his friends, were dark and uncertain. Olaf and his family also had no little cause of alarm in the volcano, and the prospect of scanty crops — for the land had been injured by sulphur and ashes. However, all were grateful to Divine Providence for the blessings which had been bestowed on them. They endeavoured to lessen each other's anxieties by sympathy and acts of kindness. They spent their days in active engagements, and their evenings in conversation and reading. The time passed on with little variation, until the middle of March, when the snow

began to lessen, and the weather to grow milder. In the latter part of this month, however, the air became intensely cold, owing, it was supposed, to large accumulations of drift-ice on the northern coast. In April, the winter broke up, and spring in its freshness and beauty began to reign. This period brought about important occurrences.

CHAP. XXXV.

IT was in the early part of the evening, in the middle of April, that a messenger on horseback came to Olaf Bendlemer's, bringing letters for Gudbrand Magnusson. The old man received them from the hand of Ribolt with some agitation, not knowing whether they contained tidings of good or evil. With a trembling hand, he opened one, and saw the signature of his friend Runolph Sigfusson of Reykiavick, to whom he had sent a letter by Marfrede. A hurried glance cheered him with good tidings; his eye brightened; he handed the letter to Thorna, and exclaimed, "My dear child! comfort yourself, and thank God; for light is now beginning to shine out of darkness. We shall not be so destitute and miserable as we feared."

Thorna looked eagerly at the letter, and exclaimed, "Yes, indeed; God is good." And

then, reading a little further, added, "Dear man ! he is very, very kind."

Olaf now entered, and was astonished at the altered countenances of his guests. "Good news, I hope," said he.

"Yes," replied Gudbrand. "But here, look at the letter. Thorna, my dear, hand the letter."

While Olaf was looking on it, Gudbrand stood near him, with his eyes fixed on the countenance of his friend, ready to unite with him in expressions of joy and gratitude, as soon as the contents of the letter should have been perceived. Gudbrand's eyes were sparkling with joy, and not the less so because a tear or two was stealing forth. "Yes," said Olaf; "this is a very favourable offer; and it was very kind." Gudbrand was about to respond, but his feelings were too powerful, and he burst into tears. After his joyous agitation was a little subsided, he began to converse with his friend on the new prospect which was opened before him. "The farm," said he, "which he speaks of, is at Dyverstadt; and I am to have it

for a trifling rental. It is, I should think, from the description of it, a very productive farm."

"I have heard of the place," replied Olaf, "and I know the person who occupied it. Poor fellow! I perceive he is dead. The farm is one of the best in that part of the country. I know your friend too. He is a worthy man."

"Runolph Sigfusson has been known to me," said Gudbrand, "for more than twenty years; and I believe he has been my friend ever since I became acquainted with him. I did not fear that an application, in the midst of my distress, would be disregarded, if he had any means of helping me. Here are two other letters."

Gudbrand opened one, and found it addressed to him by an old friend, who sympathised with him in his trouble, and congratulated him on obtaining what would probably be a source of profit and comfort. The letter requested him to take the earliest opportunity of setting off for Reykiavick. The other was a letter from Mar-frede; who, through the influence of his uncle, had been allowed to complete his studies at the

school of Holum; and to be ordained for the ministry by the bishop of that diocese. He was now about to take a curacy, as an assistant to an elderly minister at Steinholt, a place not more than twenty miles from Gudbrand's new residence.

Thorna was so much elated with the contents of the first letter, that she flew with the news to her hostess and Galmina, who rejoiced with the maiden on her brightening prospects. But, as human experience is not long cloudless, their joy was turned into sorrow on the reflection that they must quickly part. They had calculated on spending together at least a month or two longer; at the conclusion of which period, Galmina intended to go to Eydal, the place of her residence.

Then Thorna inquired for the messenger, that she might give to him some of the overflowings of a grateful heart, and found him alone in the kitchen. After she had made many inquiries respecting his journey, and said many kind things to him, the man evinced something like satisfaction, and a consciousness that

he could repay one favour by another, while he searched his pocket, and pulled out a letter which he handed to the maiden, and asked if it was not intended for her.

“Yes,” said she, eagerly; and, without adding a word, except as hurried thanks, slipped away to examine its contents. It was a letter from Marfrede, who entreated her to lay aside the prejudices which she had formed against him, and to allow him once more to see her, and supplicate her favour. “I am now,” said he, “about to enter the ministerial office—I hope with pure hands; for, although an unworthy servant of my Heavenly Master, I believe my motives are good; but as sure as this is so, I declare, in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, I have not willingly done any thing, or culpably neglected any thing, which would cause the displeasure of my beloved Thorna.”

The maiden read, and wept; then read, and wept again. She could not doubt the writer’s declaration; and now she began to lament more bitterly than ever, that she had made such an engagement with Thord. “Marfrede,” she

exclaimed, giving expression to her emotions, “is, I believe, faultless ; and he will reside not far from us ; and yet, if Thord be living, I must be wedded to him !”

The new cause of excitement, however — the removal to Dyverstadt — diverted Thorna’s mind in some degree, so that she thought less of her lovers. As the weather was improving, it was decided that, on the last day of April, Gudbrand and his daughter, with Sira Gudmerson — for the former would not go without the latter — should set off for Reykiavick ; and Galmina, on the same day, intended to start for Eydal.

The messenger returned, the fortnight slipped away, and the important morning arrived, when Olaf accompanied those who departed for the capital, and Ribolt set off with Galmina. Many tears had been shed, at first, accompanied with sparklings of joy ; but now, when the time was actually arrived, nothing was thought of but the parting, and there were tears — bitter tears ; shadows — dark, unvaried shadows ; it was almost a heart-breaking separation. Friends

in prosperity are united with bright and joyous cords, (if the word joyous be allowed,) which sparkle even when they are snapped asunder; but friends in misfortune are united by the web of painful sympathy, which darkens when it is strained or broken.

Gudbrand requested that, if his young friend and Ribolt, who were going to Eydal, found Eggert there, they would send him immediately to Reykiavick. "But, my dears," he added, heaving a deep sigh; "be careful how you allude to —." The old man's lip quivered, and his countenance told the rest. It will be remembered that Eggert, if alive, knew nothing of his mother's or sister's death.

Olaf proceeded as far as Hollt with his friends, and then, commanding them to the blessing of Almighty God, returned. The travellers had a fatiguing journey to Reykiavick; but being inspirited by hope, they bore it patiently; and at last were received with open arms by Runolph Sigfusson and his family. There was good news for Sira Gudmerson. The clergyman of Dyverstadt was removed to

another parish, and the recent minister of Sida was appointed in his stead.

A short time only was spent at Reykiavick, for the period was fast approaching for agricultural labour, and Gudbrand was desirous of reaching his new abode. Though advanced in years, he was still tolerably vigorous, and anxious to employ himself once more in his accustomed duties. The distance was about seventy miles, and lay on the north of the capital, so that the journey occupied four days; for being obliged to take several horses with them, heavily laden, they could travel but slowly.

When Gudbrand arrived, and entered the dwelling, he fell on his knees, and thanked God for giving him a resting-place. Thorna and Sira Gudmerson joined him, and offered up praises to the same benevolent Being.

The house was tolerably good for an Iceland house, the majority of which are little better than huts; and the best is only good in comparison with the rest.* The farm was pleasantly

* Much difference of opinion, however, has existed respecting Icelandic dwellings. Kerguelen says, MM. Hor-

situated ; the scenery on the north was bounded by rugged mountains, now silvered by the sun ; while on the south was a deep and lovely valley. Thorna's attention was attracted by a picturesque stream, which, cradled in the hills, glided forth almost imperceptibly, and came rattling down amongst the rocks, sparkling and dashing its foam about. Then it pursued a more even course, until it abruptly vanished among dark caverns : after a short time, it was observed to burst forth, bright and glistening, in the sunshine of the lovely valley.

“ I have often thought,” said Sira Gudmerson, as he gazed on the waters, “ that a stream is one of the best emblems of human life.”

“ If this before us be an emblem of our lives,”

rebows et Anderson, ne sont point d'accord sur la forme des habitations des Icelandois. Le premier, qui voit tout en beau, fait la description des maisons que les gens riches habitent. Le second qui n'écrit que sur le rapport des pêcheurs qui ont fréquenté les côtes, trace la peinture des cabanes que habitent les pauvres. La description du premier est trop magnifique ; la peinture du second ne s'éloigne pas beaucoup de la vérité.—*Relation d'un Voyage, &c.* p. 58.

said Gudbrand, "and perhaps it may be, then, the last state of the stream may represent our present happy condition ; or ——."

"Or," interposed Sira Gudmerson, "God grant it may represent our entrance into the regions of everlasting light and bliss!"

"Amen," said Gudbrand.

The church was within sight of the farm, and so was the clergyman's house, which lay near it; both of which were small. After inspecting the farm, and the scenery around, Gudbrand and his daughter accompanied Sira Gudmerson to the church, and the new pastor's residence.

Gudbrand soon began his agricultural engagements. Those who had been accustomed to work on the farm were retained; and Sira Gudmerson, with the blessings and prayers of his parishioners, entered on his ministerial duties.

CHAP. XXXVI.

RIBOLT, the son of Olaf Bendlemer, was a worthy youth, and, although not handsome, was prepossessing. He was a month or two older than Galmina. A feeling of partiality had sprung up between the latter and Eggert; but as they were not kindred spirits, it soon subsided. It was different however with this maiden and Ribolt; for a feeling of love, deeply rooted, began to diffuse its influence; and as the spirits of the lovers were similar, so their hopes and fears became intertwined with each other, and both hearts became one.

Thorna had still a slight hope that her brother and Galmina would be united; this new union therefore gave her some uneasiness; and, on the other hand, Galmina was disturbed at Thorna's conduct towards Marfrede; hence, there was something like a feeling of coolness

between the two maidens ; but it was only as a solitary cloud on a summer's day, which, after a few drops, vanishes ; it was overcome by a mutual feeling of sincere regard, and friendship again beamed forth. Many a cloud of distrust, for want of mutual candour and good sense, is suffered to increase and burst into a storm. A vast deal of caution and charity is sometimes necessary in order to prevent a trifle from setting individuals and families at discord. Imaginary grievances act as real ones ; and imaginary grievances are usually the cause of divisions among friends.

Ribolt, with much fear and trembling—as is natural when modesty solicits beauty—confessed his feelings and hopes to Galmina. The maiden declined any communications on the subject ; “for,” said she, “every thing connected with me is in a state of uncertainty.” However, although nothing explicit was mentioned to encourage the wishes of Ribolt, nothing was said which would necessarily check them ; the youth therefore, with merely negative success, was highly delighted. Indeed, human nature

and human feelings are much alike in all parts of the world; and most people are aware that the absence of real and weighty objections is the sign of ultimate success.

It may be concluded that Ribolt was not averse to the arrangement which appointed him the escort of Galmina to Eydal. The latter hoped to see her brother on her arrival; and if she were gratified, Eggert probably would be there; hence she desired Ribolt not to pay her, before him, any marked attention; for she feared that rivalry might revive in Eggert a feeling which had happily subsided.

The young travellers set out just after their friends had started for Reykiavick; and now we will leave them, and conclude this dwarfish chapter, in order to pay a visit in the beginning of June to the recently-arrived residents at Dyverstadt.

CHAP. XXXVII.

THORNA had set the house in order, and her father, as well as herself, had begun to taste the sweets of home. Sira Gudmerson had commenced his ministerial labours, and on the first Sunday in which he had done duty, had given an account of the calamities which had visited him and his Sida friends, with the interpositions of Providence in their behalf, which, as the pillar of fire to the Israelites, had preserved them from harm. A deep interest was felt by the congregation, and all seemed more than usually impressed with the conviction—That there is a great and merciful Being who governs the earth.

Marfrede, on learning the arrival of his friends, sent another letter to Thorna; to which the maiden returned an answer, confessing that she felt, as formerly, a great regard

for him ; but a series of singular and unfortunate circumstances had caused her, in a fit of bewilderment, to enter into engagements which she was bound to fulfil ; and hence, she begged him not to renew the correspondence ; but if, she added, any unforeseen event should release her from her contract, she would allow him to explain some circumstances which still, in her view, seemed to be mysterious.

Marfrede read the letter with much trepidation. Then he knelt down and begged that, if he might lawfully offer such a request, Divine goodness would open the way to the consummation of his wishes ; or, if this could not be granted, would enable him to bear his disappointment with fortitude. However, agreeably with the wish of Thorna, he determined not to write until he had received leave to do so.

A few days after, Gudbrand received a letter from Reykiavick, containing the joyful news, that a man who had come to the fair*, from

* There is a large fair annually held at Reykiavick, in the latter part of June or the beginning of July, at which

the north-eastern coast, with bear-skins, had seen Eggert at Eydal. The latter had met the man accidentally, and had begged him to make inquiry for Gudbrand Magnusson of Sida, and also for Runolph Sigfusson of Reykiavick, and to inform Runolph that Eggert, the son of Gudbrand, was now at Eydal, and very anxious respecting his family.

When the old man read it, he exclaimed, "Thank God!" and wept for joy. Thorna also was delighted, and full of grateful feelings. Sira Gudmerson was sent for, that all might rejoice together.

"What a comfort it will be for me," said Gudbrand, the tears trickling down his face, "when I sink into the weakness of age, and become incapable of ministering to, but require to be ministered on, to have my son with me to superintend my affairs, and to be a companion and a protector for my dear Thorna!"

the produce of the country is exchanged for articles imported from Denmark. The former consists of knitted hose, skins, saddle-cloths, butter, cattle, &c.: the latter of corn, groceries, linen, &c.

It was soon observed that not a word was said of Thord. The letter was examined again and again by Gudbrand; then the maiden took it, and read every sentence; but there was not a word about him.

“How is this?” said Gudbrand to Sira Gudmerson.

“Really, I cannot explain it,” said he, “unless we suppose that the poor fellow did not survive. And this is not unlikely; for, probably, he was exposed to many dangers and great hardships.”

There was a considerable change of countenance in Thorna at this remark. And yet a close observer would scarcely have been able to decide what feeling predominated, for it seemed little more than a neutralisation of contending emotions. She said nothing.

“If Eggert,” observed Gudbrand, “had been alone, he would have spoken of no one but his own relatives; but if Thord were at Eydal, and anxious respecting his sister, either he, or Eggert for him, would have sent some message. I fear the poor fellow is dead.”

"I am inclined to think," said Sira Gudmer-
son, (speaking slowly and almost reluctantly, as
if a firm conviction compelled him to offer an
opinion,) "your conclusion is too true. Poor
fellow!"

Thorna could scarcely restrain herself from weeping; not because she loved Thord, although she respected him, but because her mind was agitated by conflicting emotions. Death is, in almost every case, affecting to contemplate; and in many instances, when the object of our dislike is removed, the feeling of aversion ceases. In regard to Thorna, however, there was no particular dislike to the person, but only to the engagement in which she was trammelled.

Many days passed on, and nothing was heard of Eggert. Thorna, as might have been expected, was extremely anxious; for until her brother returned, she knew not how to decide. Her future prospect was bewildering. She knew not whether she might allow her affections to wing their way glistening in the rays of hope; or whether she must keep them chained down in the depths of darkness and despondency.



She knew not whether Marfrede or Thord was to be her companion for life: but she would have given a world to have been able to solve — or, at least, to have been able to solve in a particular way — the question.

One evening she was sitting in one of the rooms alone — the weather was delightfully calm — the sky without a cloud — the sun was just behind the purple-tinted mountains — and the moon was hanging in the eastern heavens — every thing was peaceful but Thorna. “How is this?” she exclaimed; when her feelings became so powerful as to express themselves in a soliloquy. “Why am I thus anxious, as the convict in dread of death or in hope of pardon? Let me prepare myself for the worst, and become reconciled to that. It is of little consequence what a person gains or loses — hopes or fears — when a few days at most will wrap the whole in oblivion. Let me bend myself to the worst, and be pleased with that. Let me suppose myself bound for life to Thord, and let me consider any change as a disadvantage. Why may I not do so? Happiness is a matter of

opinion. If a person thinks himself happy, he is so; hence the beggar, the destitute, the disappointed may be happy. A man may derive enjoyment from buffeting, and then floating away on the current of adversity. His mind, like the sea in a tempest, may brighten from its excessive vigour and action. It may, in fact, conquer everything — even its ordinary sources of gratification, and triumph in the wreck. Let me, therefore, bring myself down to the thing which I most fear, and content myself with it. And," she added, in a lower tone, as if scarcely allowing herself to hear it spoken, "if, after a time, circumstances should change, I shall be able to bring my mind to them. Now," she continued, "Thord lives, without doubt; or at least, it is very probable: at any rate, I am not certain of the contrary. Let not a single thought imply that I wish him dead. What? wish him dead? The thought is horrid.— Overwhelmed perhaps in the fiery lava, while my dear brother was preserved; and overwhelmed, probably, in endeavouring to save him. Really, if I were to wish him dead, I should despise myself; and I am

well aware, it would be only by his death, that I should be free from my engagements. It would be shameful — it would be abominable — to put death in one scale, with my foolish inclinations in the other, and to cause the latter to weigh down the former ! Do I not believe in a future state ? — In a state of retribution ? — What might I expect to hear from the Judge of all, if I indulged such cruel, such horrible selfishness ? No, no ; I cannot wish him dead — hurried away to the bar of his Maker without preparation — His mind perhaps filled with earthly thoughts, and his attention engaged, at one moment, with struggles to preserve life ; and, at the next, in the arms of death, floating away on the awful abyss of eternity ! Oh ! what are the things of time compared with these ? — What are the little interests — the inconveniences, the hopes, the fears of life, in comparison with the concerns of death ? No, no ; I do not wish him dead ; but I will rejoice in his existence, and thank —. May I feel grateful to God," she continued, " for preserving him ; and I hope that the Divine Being will prepare

him for another life before he takes him hence. It is an awful thing to die; and it would be cruel and unnatural indeed if I were to wish him dead, merely that I might be free from my engagement! It is true, I made the contract rashly. What could have possessed me when I did it? Oh! it was a sad, a miserable day when I yielded to his wishes!" After a pause, she said, in a tone of despondency, placing her hand on her heart, "My heart throbs violently; my hand is palsied; my forehead is burning; but tears refuse to flow. Why am I thus feverish and agitated? Oh, God! tranquillise my mind, and cause me to feel what I have expressed. Make me pure and disinterested, that I may be——. Hark! What is that?"

It was the sound of a horse. Thorna started from her seat, and looked out. Oh, Heaven! it was her brother! He was alighting. A momentary flash of hope and joy, like lightning, electrified her — He was there *alone*. It was but momentary; she checked it, and rushed out of the room. Footsteps met her's, as she flew through the passage; she shrew her arms

about him, and exclaimed, "My dear ! my dear — !" Delight choked her utterance — she wept for joy.

"My dear, my beloved Thorna !" he exclaimed; and, hanging on each other, they entered the room.

"My dear boy !" she cried, as she turned again to embrace him; she uttered a dreadful scream, and fell on the floor — It was Thord !

Thord had come first to the door, but the maiden was so much engaged that she did not hear him; and when she looked out, she saw Eggert only. As soon as she screamed and fell, her brother rushed in, and for a moment was shocked and motionless; while Thord stood by, as pale as a corpse. The maiden however was soon raised from the floor.

"She thought," said Thord to Eggert, "she was speaking to you."

"And then," he replied, "when she found it was another, she was frightened. That was natural enough."

Thord did not think it unnatural; and yet he was much mortified.

When Thorna recovered, she apologised for her conduct, and said the mistake was so complete and the discovery so sudden, that she had not the least controul over herself; however, as a compensation, she allowed Thord to embrace her very affectionately. All were now become tranquil and cheerful; for Thorna saw that her fate was fixed, and hence doubt and anxiety were removed: her mind was tranquil, in the same manner as a ship is, when it is stranded pretty high on the beach, or embedded in sand, without a chance of ever again floating on the tide. There were no signs of disquiet when Gudbrand and Sira Gudmerson entered the room. The good old man had been sent for, and being at the clergyman's house, his friend returned with him. Gudbrand embraced his son with almost rapturous feelings — he hung on him, and wept, and praised God for giving him his son. He embraced Thord also with great affection. Sira Gudmerson seemed almost as much delighted as Gudbrand.

The evening was spent in an interesting manner. Sometimes all were in tears, owing

to the communicating of painful events, and sometimes all were filled with gratitude and joy. Eggert said that the distress of his party, on being cut off from their Sida friends, was indescribable, for they could anticipate nothing but death. After some time, however, they discovered a track which was comparatively safe, and while on their way, looked back and beheld their relations on the distant hills, whom they believed they saw for the last time. After encountering many difficulties, amongst which may be reckoned the loss of their cattle, exposure to showers of hot ashes, endurance of hunger, thirst, and sickness, nearly one half of the party arrived at some farms about fifty miles to the north-east of Sida. Here, while the wind blew from the east, they were safe; but when it changed to the south they were obliged to depart, and then Eggert and Thord proceeded to Eydal. The time spent there was far from tranquil or pleasant, for one of them was in continual anxiety respecting his sister, and the other respecting the whole of his family.

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Galmina and Ribolt had arrived safe at Eydal; and almost immediately after their arrival, Eggert and Thord had set out for Dyverstadt.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Poor Thorna was now sick at heart; all her hopes had been blighted; then the blossoms had again burst forth, but they had again been destroyed. It was of no use for her to profess, or to endeavor to rise above the common feelings of humanity; for passion in her — as it should be in every woman — was stronger than philosophy. However, she was mistress of herself in one respect — she was determined to drag herself to the altar, and to sacrifice herself to Thord.

The maiden's lover had come with the hope that she would accept his hand without delay, and go back with him to Eydal. To this proposal, with the indifference which despondency occasions, she made no objection. Gudbrand was grieved to lose his daughter, and Eggert his sister; but as Thorna was to have been united to Thord several months before, they could make no objections to the nuptials now.

Thord fancied that the maiden was depressed in spirits, and suffered, rather than encouraged his attentions; hence, on one occasion, after conversing on various subjects connected with their union, he said, "My dear Thorna, why are you so much depressed? Is it because you are unwell; or because you do not feel the regard for me which I ardently desire? My happiness is dependant on you. Oh! I wish that the feeling were mutual."

"I am unwell," replied the maiden; "and I have had many painful circumstances to combat lately—many things to depress my spirits. However, my lot is cast with yours, I yield to your wishes; and I hope I shall ever render myself worthy of your regard."

This reply was not indicative of very warm attachment, but it was more encouraging than what Thord had lately heard, and he was quite delighted. He troubled himself little now on account of the maiden's gloom; but feasted his imagination with glowing anticipations of the approaching marriage.

The latter part of May was fixed for the

wedding; and Sira Gudmerson had engaged to perform the service. "Thank God!" exclaimed Thorna, in one of her mournful soliloquies, "I shall not continue in this part of the country, for if I were to see Marfrede after I was bound for life to another, I believe I should die. If I were to see him on the wedding day, in the church for instance, I know not — Oh! the thought is dreadful."

Not many days after, when Thorna was alone, Sira Gudmerson called at the house for the purpose of seeing Gudbrand; but as the latter, with the young men, was absent and expected soon, he sat down. The maiden was very sad, and could not conceal her unhappiness from the visitor.

"My dear girl," said the clergyman, "you ought now, in expectation of an event, which is deemed the happiest in life, to be free from care and gloom."

Thorna made no reply; her heart was full almost to bursting, and, happily, she quenched her feverous excitement in a flood of tears. Sira Gudmerson conjectured the cause of her

unhappiness, and deemed it his duty to obtain, if possible, an explanation of the maiden's feelings and wishes. Her father and brother, although very affectionate and attentive to her, were not aware that Thorna so much preferred the former to the present lover.

"My dear friend," said Sira Gudmerson; "in virtue of my sacred office, and my friendship for you and your family, put some confidence in me, and tell me candidly what your feelings are in respect of this union; for remember, that she who enters the state of matrimony binds herself to love her husband: but how can she love him after marriage, if not before? Consider what an important, what a sacred contract it is, and hesitate before you violate the spirit of it, by uttering words which are not responsive to the heart. Besides, the absence of love in one is the source of misery to both;—perhaps greater misery to him who loves, but is not loved in return: and do you think you would act justly towards Thord by binding around his brow a wreath of thorns, which would torture him for life? Surely, if

your regard for him be less than warm and powerful, you would act more kindly by opposing than by yielding to his solicitations; and he himself, in the course of years, would thank you, rather than condemn you for it."

"Really," said Thorna, after a pause, and one or two ineffectual attempts to reply, "you are so kind that I cannot but feel grateful to you. However, it may be sufficient for me to say that it cannot now be altered. I am engaged to him, and I have had no thought but that, whatever comes of it, I must fulfil my engagement. Besides, a vow made in the presence of Heaven is not to be lightly esteemed; or at least, I think so; and having made that vow, and being required by Thord to fulfil it, I must comply."

"My dear girl!" exclaimed Sira Gudmèrson; "imagine not for a moment that I wish you to think lightly of a vow; for if made under a full and fair representation of circumstances, it is binding, unless by the consent of both parties it be dissolved."

"I know Thord," she replied; "he will not

give me up. If I loved him, his ardour would delight me: but — ”

“ What ! do you *not* love him ? Do you think of marrying a man — of being bound to him for life — without loving him ? The thought is dreadful ? This is the way to strew the path of life with thorns instead of flowers, and to make the sounds that assail the ears mourning and lamentation, instead of notes of joy and gladness. This is the way to turn earth into hell ! — yes, indeed ; for what deeper hell is there than a sick and tortured mind ? Oh, my dear Thorna ! it will not do. There must be something wrong — something which ought to be, and which may be set right. I feel an interest in your welfare ; and you must not, you shall not, if I can prevent it, plunge headlong into ruin. I have not, perhaps, heard the whole of the reasons which induced you to transfer your regard from Marfrede to Thord.”

“ One,” replied Thorna, “ was alleged inattention on the part of Marfrede, who had promised to correspond with me as frequently as opportunities offered ; but, from the time he

left Sida until he was thrown on shore at Loftafell, I heard nothing of him or from him, unless that he had spoken degradingly of me, and had become dissipated, and had given his regards to a stranger."

"There is something marvellous in this," replied Sira Gudmerson, "especially as Marfrede assured me, he had not, in any instance, done or omitted any thing to cause offence. He said he had been unaccountably neglected by you — that he had written three letters, but had received no answer. Can you depend on Marfrede's veracity?"

"I believe he would not," said Thorna, "utter a falsehood for the sake of gaining an estate. I have always found him strictly correct. His heart is, I believe, as pure as sunbeams on the driven snow."

"We must believe then," observed Sira Gudmerson, "that Marfrede sent three letters; but you, expecting to receive a letter first — which is the manner of maiden's modesty; and the deeper and more sincere the love, the more scrupulous is the sex in regard to trifling mat-

ters, and the more sensitive of any thing like neglect — you, however, receiving no letter, would send none. Are you sure that if a letter had been brought to Sida, it would have been given to you?"

As a flash of lightning discovers to the benighted traveller scenes which he had scarcely dreamt of, and as the opening of a dark cell to the glare of day bewilders and confounds the captive, so this hint produced an indefinable effect on Thorna. After a few moments, she said, "That is a question I have never proposed to myself. However, on considering it, I do not know how a letter could have been kept from me."

"If you have never thought on the matter," replied the clergyman, "by all means think of it now: and, thank God! it is not too late. I assure you I shall not let this subject rest — I shall inquire into it."

Just at this moment, Gudbrand, Eggert, and Thord arrived. In order to give Thorna time to compose herself, Sira Gudmerson went out and met them in the court, and kept them for a few minutes engaged in conversation.

CHAP. XXXIX.

ON the next day the clergyman contrived to see Eggert. "My dear boy," said he, "I am anxious to make some inquiries of you."

"On what subject?"

"Relating to your sister. You remember the time, I suppose, when Marfrede went to Copenhagen."

"Yes. I accompanied Thorna to the beach, and saw Marfrede go off to the ship."

"And you remember the period that followed."

"Yes, very well. Why?"

"Now this is the question I wish to ask; Marfrede assured me that he sent three letters to Sida, but it seems that none of them arrived. Do you know any thing of those letters? Now, my dear Eggert, strain your recollection a little; for I am anxious to know."

"No. I do not recollect any thing of them. I merely know, or I think — for she said little about it — that Thorna was expecting a letter."

"Do you recollect nothing more?"

Eggert remained for a minute or two in deep thought; and then said, "I have a notion that I heard something about a letter; but really I don't know what it was. It was though, I think, something about poor Vola. I know now what it was. One day, I was sitting reading, while Vola was in the next room; and I heard her say something of this sort — she was speaking to herself, as she frequently did — 'Alas, poor girl! she is stepped into it now, and she will not, for any thing I can do, step out of it. It would be cruel to keep the letter from her. I will — I will procure it, and give it to the poor girl; and then I shall have the pleasure of looking on, and watching her joyous countenance, and perceiving what true love in a pure heart will do. Now my dear,' (she was speaking to what she had in her hand, which was sometimes her playful manner,) 'be very tractable, that I may finish you, and go on the

wings of peace, to bring balm for poor disconsolate Thorna.' And then, after a minute, she added — for she did not suppose any one heard her — 'Thord, I suppose (Oh ! foolish Thord to fall in love !) will not, I hope, refuse to give it up. Thord in love with Thorna ! Why not in love with me ? But I would not receive his attention ; no, not I — I would dash it away as the rivulets do the sunshine !' These were just the expressions ; but I thought nothing of her nonsense. The better plan would be to inquire of Thord, whether he knows any thing of a letter. But if he should, how would that affect Thorna ?"

"It would affect her considerably," replied the clergyman. "Indeed, on that hinge, as I may express it, her happiness or misery turns."

"How so ?"

"Thorna," replied Sira Gudmerson, "supposed herself neglected by Marfrede ; and hence she suffered her regard to be nominally transferred to Thord. She believed the latter to be fair and honourable, and on this supposition engaged herself. If Marfrede wrote, he is ex-

culpated from blame, and your sister had no sufficient reason for what she did. If Thord used dishonourable means to obtain Thorna's regard, the engagement with him is broken."

"Oh ! but I do not wish that," exclaimed Eggert.

"If Thorna's happiness depended on it, you would wish it," said the clergyman.

"But it does not," replied Eggert.

"I ask you," said the clergyman, "if her happiness depended on it, would you not wish it ?"

"Yes, of course; but I do not think it does depend on it."

"I have reason to know," replied Sira Gudmerson, "that if she marries Thord she will be miserable; but if she marries Marfrede it will be — as it appears to me — an union of two who have loved each other from childhood, and will love till death."

"Thorna," said Eggert, (who was now considerably softened,) "is a dear girl; and she is my only sister; I would not for the world that she should be unhappy."

“Nor I,” added Sira Gudmerson. “The God of the distressed—the Protector of the innocent—and the Avenger of the injured—will, I hope, avert the evil that threatens her!”

“I am anxious,” said Eggert, “that this matter should be inquired into. But how can it be done? Will you speak to Thord?”

“I have no objection to do so. However, what requires to be done, must be done quickly.”

“Will you go now?” said Eggert. “For we shall probably be able to see him.”

Sira Gudmerson complied with the proposal, and both set off for Gudbrand’s dwelling. Thord was at the door, and was requested to walk in with the clergyman and Eggert. When they were seated, and only these in the room, Sira Gudmerson said to Thord, “When I saw Marfrede at Loftafell, he told me he had sent three letters to Thorna” (Thord began to exhibit symptoms of uneasiness); “neither of which, however, was received by her. I have inquired of Eggert, who tells me that he heard his sister Vola, in one of her flighty soliloquies, say something about a letter. The poor girl, we have

reason to hope, became a penitent, and a sincere Christian before her death; and God, I have no doubt, took her to the realms of bliss: but we have now to do with the living; and I beg you, my dear Thord, to tell me what you know about a letter which was brought to Sida for Thorna, and which Vola intimated was in your possession."

Thord was almost struck to the ground. He became deadly pale, and totally incapable of speaking; while, at the same time, his emotions were so powerful, that he seemed to be almost gasping for life. The whole of the dreadful consequences burst upon his view. The secret was disclosed — Thorna was lost — lost for ever! Some touching thoughts seemed now to re-animate his paralised faculties, and he began to weep, then to rave and utter the most desponding exclamations, until he had lost all control over himself.

Thord knew that Thorna loved Marfrede, and that deception alone had caused her to turn aside from her former lover to himself. The sudden disclosure of the affair sunk him

from the height of joyful anticipation to the depths of despair; and after his voice had ceased, from exhaustion, to articulate, he groaned in the bitterness of his spirit.

Sira Gudmerson was much affected, but was compelled to act justly, although he might yield to the softer feelings and indulge commiseration. "This," said he, "is a melancholy occurrence. I can, however, give you no hope. Thorna is absolved from her engagement; and you know, as well as I, that she will give herself to him who has been, innocently, the subject of much calumny and misery."

"Yes, yes," added Eggert, with an agitated voice; "this is really a bad matter. But, Thord, what did you do with the letter?"

The convicted deceiver took no notice of what was said to him. He was almost frantic.

Eggert slipped away, and communicated the intelligence to Thorna. "My dear girl!" said he, "something of an unexpected kind has come to light."

"What? What is the matter with Thord?"

inquired the maiden; for she had heard his voice.

“ He has acted shamefully towards you,” replied her brother. “ I did value him as a friend; but he has been treacherous. Do you know that he received one of the letters from Marfrede ?”

“ He ? He received one of the letters ?” exclaimed Thorna. “ How, how could he have received it ?”

“ How he got it I know not; but he had it, and kept it; or at least, it seems that it never came into your hands.”

“ No: I never saw a letter from Marfrede. But, are you certain that what you say is true? Did the poor fellow write to me as he promised; and has treachery deprived me of his letters, and brought on both of us so much anxiety and misery ?” The maiden burst into tears. “ If this is so,” she exclaimed, “ O ! I am not bound to Thord for a moment. No ! it was on the supposition that he was honourable and faithful, that I pledged myself to him. I knew not, I never thought that a deed so dark was the

foundation on which my engagement rested ; but I thought, I fancied all was not right. I thought that Heaven would not have suffered me to rest my soul on Marfrede, if he had been unfaithful ; or to feel an aversion to Thord, if he had been honest and true."

Just at that moment Sira Gudmerson came in. " You have, I suppose," said he to Eggert, " told your sister of this affair. Indeed, I consider it a singular interposition of Divine Providence. He wishes now," he continued, addressing himself to Thorna, " that you would see him, and forgive him."

" I have no objection to forgive him," replied the maiden ; " and I pray that God will do so : but if with forgiveness he wishes to renew his claims on me, he will never, never succeed. No ; it was by deception he induced me to bind myself ; and now" (fixing a soliciting and penetrating look on the clergyman), " do you not consider me free ? "

" By all means," he replied, " I believe that a contract is binding only when it is founded on honor and integrity."

Sira Gudmerson went to look for Thord, in order to endeavour to tranquillise him. The imprudent youth was convinced that all hope of winning Thorna was lost, and he was now ashamed to see her, for he was afraid of the maiden's reproaches, and he was content to satisfy himself with the declaration that she would forgive him. As his fate was sealed, he determined, as soon as he became capable of thinking on the subject, to leave Dyverstadt on the next morning. It would be enough, he thought, to inform his friends that the engagement had been dissolved, without mentioning the particulars of the occurrence: and he begged Gudbrand's family to say as little as possible about it.

On the next morning, before it was fairly day, the unhappy youth left Dyverstadt for Eydal.

CHAP. XL.

GUDBRAND was informed of the discovery respecting the letter, and he was astonished. After remaining silent for a few moments, he said, "I always supposed that Marfrede was a worthy boy, although latterly I thought him neglectful. I thank God for opening our eyes before it was too late."

On the next day — the day on which Thord had left — Thorna consulted her father respecting her future proceedings. He advised her to inform Marfrede of what had happened. The maiden felt diffident about it; but Gudbrand said, "My dear, my fingers are become unused to penmanship; and Eggert, you know, will never do any thing of the kind; therefore you must send a note to Marfrede, and say that you wish to see him."

"Oh, father! I cannot do that."

“ Why, girl, should you not like to see him, in order to inform him of the discovery, and to make any inquiries of him that may be necessary ? ”

“ I should like to explain what has occurred with Thord ; and I should like to hear something more about the letters.”

“ Then, my dear, encourage no false delicacy — be sincere and perfectly simple. I have no fear but that you will act maidenly and modestly.”

“ I hope so, father.”

Thorna wrote a letter, which was sent to Marfrede on the next morning ; and in the evening, the youth, with the messenger returned. On the journey, he had been anxious as to the cause of his summons, for Thorna had not communicated the particulars ; but his mind was relieved when he was told that Thord Thordalston had left Dyverstadt on that morning. “ Surely,” he said to himself, “ something dishonourable has been discovered. There is yet hope for me ! ”

Marfrede came as fast as the horses could

conveniently travel, and arrived about dusk, when he was made welcome by the affectionate salutation of Gudbrand and Eggert. After he had rested for a few minutes, he was introduced to Thorna, who preferred having an early interview with him, that she might, by the explanation which he gave, regulate her conduct towards him."

The maiden received him with kindness. "I fear," said she, "I have done you wrong—I have thought more harshly of you than you deserved; but I deem it my duty to explain what has recently occurred, and to beg a reply to one or two questions."

"My dear Thorna!" interposed Marfrede; "offer no apologies. I am conscious that I have given you no cause to think harshly of me; but if you have been deceived, you are not culpable; the blame lies with the deceiver."

"I believe," said Thorna, "I have been cruelly deceived. When you were at Copenhagen, did you not write to me two or three times?"

"I wrote twice in the summer," he replied,

“and once in the spring, before I left; and I have understood that you, by some unaccountable means, never received one of the letters.”

“The last,” said the maiden, “I could not have received; the second, I know not what became of it; the first—I believe it was the first—got into the possession of Thord.”

“Of Thord? How? What did he do with it?”

“He must have destroyed it. It never came into my hands.”

“What villainy!” exclaimed Marfrede—“Ah! we have dearly paid for this!”

Thorna made no reply; but her tears, which flowed in company with those of Marfrede, testified to the acute remembrance of her sorrow.

“I have told you,” he continued, “that I sent three letters. You know something of one; do you not believe the others were sent?”

“I have no reason to doubt it,” she replied, “indeed I fully believe they were sent. But, before I was undeceived, I fancied you had neglected me, and this was the cause of my

behaviour towards you. I was much distressed; I was miserable; and the remarks of my friends tended only to increase my misery. There were many reports also respecting you, that you had become immoral, and had spoken disrespectfully and cruelly of me, and had given your regards to another. These reports were confirmed by a lad from Denmark."

"I solemnly declare," exclaimed Marfrede, with much energy, "all this is false! I did not—I have not, in any instance, done any thing to wound your mind, or to dissolve the connection between us,—which I fondly hoped, was indissoluble."

"However," said the maiden, "for I wish to be quite candid with you, as, I have no doubt, you will be with me ——"

"You may depend on it," he replied. "My tongue, especially on this occasion, would be incapable of uttering a falsehood."

"These accounts," continued the maiden, "apparently proof against contradiction, so disordered my mind, that I became regardless of my future welfare. Thord pretended to

be enamoured of me, and availed himself of every opportunity, in my weaker moments, of pestering me with his solicitations; until, at last, I yielded,—I consented to accept him. This engagement held me fast, and I was about to be united to him, when the earthquake drove us from our dwelling. A second time, I was about to be led to the altar by him, when the discovery of his fraud released me from my vows."

Marfrede had been standing in breathless suspense, until Thorna completed her communication; and then he exclaimed, "Merciful Heaven! I thank thee for preserving us from this treachery."

"I can scarcely think of these events," said Thorna, "without great agitation; for there has been something mysterious and peculiarly painful in them."

"I thank God!" exclaimed Marfrede, "for bringing light out of darkness. I freely confess that, although I have been very miserable, indeed, no one can conceive the mental suffering that I have endured on account of your

apparently causeless indifference, yet I can perceive a sufficient reason for the whole—you did no more than you were naturally compelled to do. But what villainous, what awful deception was practised by Thord! I can scarcely think of it without shuddering. You could not, under the influence of such treachery, have acted differently. I assure you, there is no feeling in my mind but that of high esteem for your honour and integrity."

"I lament," said Thorna, in tears, "that circumstances were so very painful; and I regret that I was so very premature; but, really, I was urged on by my own feelings, the conduct of Thord, and of those around me, so that I scarcely knew what I did. I am grateful—yes, I am grateful to Almighty God for having dispelled the darkness and suspicion that rested between us."

"You do then, my dear Thorna," exclaimed Marfrede—his eyes flashing joy through their outward indications of sorrow, as sunbeams descending amidst drops of rain, and making

those drops more beautiful — “ You do then exculpate me from blame !”

“ Yes,” said the maiden; “ I believe that our suspicions, harsh judgings, and painful feelings, were excited by treachery only.”

“ We meet then, once more,” exclaimed Marfrede, almost in raptures, “ on the same happy terms as formerly, before art and guile had loosened those ties which had bound us from our earliest days.”

The silence and tears of the maiden gave consent to the declarations of Marfrede; and now, former vows were renewed, and they pledged themselves, under the favour of a beneficent Providence, to become no more the dupes of treachery, but to live and die in unclouded confidence and love. Darkness and anxiety were succeeded by brightness and peace — the stormy wilderness of their minds became, as it were, a lovely garden, in which were pleasant flowers, grateful fragrance, and the melody of joy.

The preparations which had been made for a nuptial ceremony, and which, in Thorna’s

imagination, had seemed like funeral pomp and gloom, were exchanged for preparations brightened with hope. It was arranged that Marfrede and Thorna should be united in the month of August, and should reside at Marfrede's curacy — the parish of Steinholt.

The weeks rolled on, and the morning, which was to usher in a day of peace, was approaching. Sira Gudmerson had engaged to perform the nuptial ceremony, and was highly delighted with the prospect of it. To a good mind, the contemplation of happiness, even in another, is pleasing. The Deity delights in the good of his creatures, and man is most godlike when he feels most of this disinterestedness.

On the morning of the wedding, Thorna received a letter from Galmina, in which the latter expressed her sorrow at the late painful disclosure, but hoped that the Divine Being would overrule it for the benefit of all. She wrote partly for the purpose of preserving friendly feelings with Thorna, and partly for the purpose of saying that her brother was

become, in some degree, resigned to his fate; and, she believed, was much humbled and instructed by it. She hinted, in confidence to her friend, that Ribolt and herself would be united shortly — which event actually took place, and the young couple resided on a farm not far from Loftafell.

It was a happy day for Dyverstadt, when Marfrede and his beloved Thorna were joined in the silken bands of wedlock. It seemed almost, as if nature had arrayed herself in smiles for the occasion. The clear blue heavens; the green carpet of nature, just laid on; the glistening and warbling of streams; the songs of birds; the repose of beasts of labour; the holiday-keeping of parents and children, contributed to make this a delightful day. Many a simple, but ardent prayer ascended, on that occasion, from the footstool of earth to the throne of the Majesty of heaven; and one great blessing — involving all, animate and inanimate — seemed to rest on the pleasing scene.

Six months after, Marfrede and Thorna

were still at Steinholt, Sira Gudmerson, Gudbrand, and Eggert were at Dyverstadt; and all were enjoying, under the favour of Providence, the tranquil blessings of life.

THE END.

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